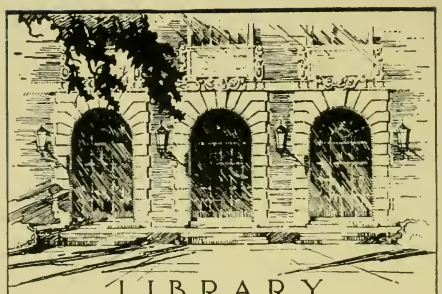

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WEDDED LIFE

IN THE UPPER RANKS.

THE WIFE AND FRIENDS,

AND

THE MARRIED MAN.

One half of the world knows not how the o'her lives.

OLD PROVERB.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE

WIFE AND FRIENDS.

CHAPTER I.

It was night when Graham returned home. On his table was a note written many hours before from Lord Delamore. Its contents were not particularly pleasing to Graham, being a proposal to breakfast with him the following morning, that they might ride to join the hounds together. Lord Delamore added, that it would be their parting ride, as he himself with Lady Delamore were engaged to spend a few days at the house of a neighbouring gentleman.

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Lord Delamore accordingly on the following morning made his appearance: he apologized for being late, alleging carelessly that Lady Delamore was unwell. Graham turned pale at the information.

"She was better," Lord Delamore added, "when I left home: she has been lately very subject to nervous attacks, which however do not surprise me."

Graham raised his eyes in astonishment.

Lord Delamore continued, as he composedly poured out his coffee: "Women have such an antipathy to exercise, and such a passion for the fireside, that their low spirits are easily accounted for. The only surprise to me is, how they should ever be exempt from what are termed nervous disorders. When I first knew Caroline at Delamore Castle, she used to walk and ride all day long, and knew

not the name of a nerve; but, now that she leads a more inactive life, every noise makes her tremble, and she is four-and-twenty hours recovering the rough shutting of a door, or any one addressing her in a key approaching to loudness."

Lord Delamore ceased. Graham had the discretion to be silent: a deep sigh, however, escaped him as he thought,—"This is all the sympathy poor Caroline's tender and wounded spirit obtains! In Delamore's place, how different would be my feelings, my actions, my judgment!" And as his fancy flew to that spot at Highwood, where, in solitude and sorrow, sat the desolate Caroline, a heavy sigh burst from his overcharged bosom.

Lord Delamore started.—"I believe low spirits are infectious—you certainly have caught Caroline's malady:—what

in the world ails you, that you are so silent and so sad?"

Mr. Graham left his seat, and, throwing open a widow, complained of the heat of the room; then adding something about their being late, Lord Delamore took the hint, and, rising from the table, proposed their departure; they were soon on their horses, and pursuing their route at too rapid a rate for conversation. Their thoughts were, however, not unemployed. Lord Delamore reflected that his idol, Graham, had shown some inequality of temper that morning, of which he had once deemed him incapable; and, as he cast occasional glances at his friend's contracted brows and closed lips, the imperfection of human nature, his favourite subject of meditation, occurred forcibly to his mind. His observations were unheeded by Graham, who, with his thoughts occupied

alone by Caroline, soon forgot he had a companion, or even an object in his ride.

It was on the evening of the above-mentioned day, that Lady Delamore, in proceeding on the visit to which allusion has been made, stopped at a small and retired public-house or inn, for the purpose of refreshing the panting and pampered steeds which had drawn her so far from Highwood—about half-way to the place of her destination. Though small, the inn was neat in its appearance, and the air of bustle which prevailed in the yard and house, proclaimed a place of more resort than seemed probable from its retired situation. It was growing dusk; the horses were solacing themselves with water, and Caroline, who had declined the pressing instances of the fresh-coloured landlady to alight, remained, sunk back in the carriage, lost

in melancholy musing. She was aroused by the dark shadow of a man at the window. — "Good Heaven!" she exclaimed, starting forward, "Lord Delamore!"

"Caroline, you had better come into the house; I have something to communicate: my going to Stoke is out of the question, and you probably will have little inclination also. Graham has had a dreadful fall—I fear, a dangerous one."

Lady Delamore answered not; but, more dead than alive, descended from the carriage. Lord Delamore took her by the arm, and led her into the house. At that moment, the clattering of horses' hoofs was heard in the yard; and in another moment a neighbouring surgeon, who had been fetched by Mr. Graham's groom, entered the house. Caroline was quickly abandoned, and

Lord Delamore entered with the surgeon into the apartment where Mr. Graham lay. The landlady aroused Caroline shortly from a state bordering almost on insensibility; and supporting her, gently led her into the parlour, where a violent flood of tears gave relief to her overcharged heart.

"Ah! I do not wonder you should grieve," observed the consolatory landlady; "it is a sad thing to be cut off in one's prime, as one may say of the poor gentleman, who, I fear, is dying in the other room. And so fine a young man as was Squire Graham: and so good! I warrant a kind master, for his groom was like one distracted, when they brought him here; and he is now gone to Branches to fetch his valet, just as if the poor beast he rides had not been far and fast enough already. I wanted him to take a nag of ours; but those young

lads are over-wilful, and no more listened to my telling him I would have it caught and saddled, than if the dog had barked, but was off in the twinkling of an eye.—But, Lord bless me, my lady, how pale you look!—shall I get you some brandy and water, or wine, or sal-volatile?"

Caroline assented to the last proposition; and Mrs. Evans quickly produced a bottle from a corner cupboard. Caroline having swallowed a portion of the contents, was deemed by the landlady sufficiently revived to be able to listen to the actual account of the accident; she was unwilling to let an opportunity pass of narrating the particulars, more especially to one who seemed so deeply interested, and with whom, therefore, her eloquence could not fail of commanding attention.

"Mr. Graham, as my husband says, is

a desperate hard rider after the hounds; and my husband is a pretty good judge, for, when his nag is fresh, he can follow with the best of them. Well, and so as usual, Mr. Graham was amongst the foremost, leaping over hedge and ditch, and gates and brooks, just as if he had no life to lose, as his groom said, who never saw him ride so desperate:—well, at last, in taking a leap which no man in his senses would have thought of, the horse fell over and over again, and Mr. Graham under him, from whence he was taken more dead than alive. So the poor gentleman was brought here, the accident happening close by; but by bad luck my husband is from home; so they were forced to send for a doctor from a distance. If my husband had been here, he would have found out all his ailments in a twinkling. The whole parish consult him; and whether it be

men, or dogs, or horses, or cows, he cures them all; that he does, my lady, —But as I am alive, the doctor is riding out of the yard; and here comes his lordship to tell us the news."

Lord Delamore's information was far from satisfactory. The Doctor himself had only a vague idea of the extent of the injury: some hours must elapse before he could pronounce the degree in which the brain was affected; if so much so as to amount to a concussion, his case he pronounced to be extremely alarming; more particularly as he had continued insensible, notwithstanding a great abstraction of blood. Lord Delamore, as he closed his account, threw himself into a chair, and, covering his face with his hands, gave way for a short time to the most violent emotion.

Caroline gazed upon him with the tenderest pity: never since the first

months of their acquaintance had he so much excited her interest and admiration, which, for a time, banished from her mind the cause of his distress. She approached, and uttered a few words of consolation, containing a hope which she was far from indulging herself.

"No, no," exclaimed Lord Delamore, "Mr. A. told me he thought ill of him: but I must return to his room, though he is unconscious of my presence: though first let me know what are your wishes with regard to yourself,—to remain here, or return home? I have sent an excuse to Stoke for us both."

Lady Delamore timidly hoped she might remain where she was. Lord Delamore seemed pleased that she should do so, and left the room to attend to his friend.

Under the influence of opium, Graham

either slept or was tranquil: no symptoms of consciousness had yet returned. Lord Delamore sat by his bedside awaiting the arrival of Graham's servant from Branches. It was midnight: all was quiet around. The exertions of the day, both as to mind and body, had apparently been too much for Lord Delamore's frame; a sense of extreme lassitude suddenly came over him, and every moment did he find it more painful to shake off a propensity to drowsiness, which, notwithstanding his anxiety of mind, the present quiet made every effort to conquer ineffectual. His own servant being in attendance, he suddenly started up, and, calling him to remain with his friend, repaired to the apartment occupied by his wife, whom he found pensively sitting by the fireside, unmindful of the information her maid

had given her of her bed-chamber being quite ready above-stairs.

"I have a favour to ask you, Caroline," said Lord Delamore.

Caroline expressed her readiness to comply with any wish of his.

"Unless I have half an hour's repose, I feel I shall be as incapable of exertion as poor Graham himself. His present state renders my presence more easy to be spared, and I should be glad to take the opportunity of lying down for a few minutes, if you will take my place in his room: I cannot leave him in the hands of strangers, with the possibility of his coming to himself any moment; and his servant Roberts is not yet arrived."

Lord Delamore ceased; Caroline was silent. In many respects, the proposal was one to give her the highest gratifi-

cation she was at present capable of feeling; in other respects, the greatest pain.

The impropriety of taking upon herself an office with regard to Graham which near relationship alone could justify, was, in some measure, counterbalanced by the singularity of the situation in which his unfortunate accident had placed them, and which, if he recovered, would prevent her conduct from being considered as an encouragement of his advances. Then, if he did not recover, how could she ever forgive herself for neglecting an opportunity of being useful to him in his present state? Still she hesitated what to answer, fearful of appearing to embrace too readily the proposal made her, and also trembling at the thought of being witness to the affliction of one so much esteemed.

"What are you doubtful about?"

inquired Lord Delamore sternly. "Instead of an office of humanity, and at the request of your husband, were it a scheme of pleasure, proposed by some of your gay associates in London, you would not hesitate about the loss of the whole, much more a part of the night's repose."

The tears started into Caroline's eyes at the injustice of this reproach.—"Good Heaven! I did not hesitate from want of compassion, or from any selfish motive; I only doubted whether my presence would be—be—quite agreeable to Mr. Graham."

"Very well," said Lord Delamore, moving towards the door, "I do not want you to go unless you like it."

"Stop, I implore," exclaimed Caroline eagerly; "I *do* desire it; it will be the greatest pleasure to ... obey your wishes."

"Then why did not you say so at first?"

"It was an over-strained idea of delicacy, I believe," said Caroline, blushing, "which prevented me."

"Nonsense! you do not suppose I should propose any thing to you which might offend the most fastidious prude; and though Graham might prefer the presence of his wife or sister, yet, in their absence, any one not entirely a stranger is desirable. So come with me; I will show you his room; in half an hour I will relieve you, unless you see reason to summon me before; at all events, if he becomes restless, I wish you would do so."

The room in which Graham lay was upon the ground-floor. It was a small apartment; the bed was on one side the fireplace, near which Lord Delamore placed a chair for Caroline. The servant

retired on their entrance, and in a few moments Lord Delamore did the same. The sound of his retreating steps, as he ascended the stairs, soon ceased; the door of a room above was opened and closed; the most profound silence ensued in the chamber in which Caroline was:—it seemed the silence of death. She cast a timid glance around, and then looked at the bed, about which the curtains were partly drawn. Her thoughts reverted to her last interview with Graham, when they parted, as they thought, for ever.---In what circumstances were they reunited! In a few hours, he, whose constitution seemed to defy all common maladies, was reduced to the level of the most impotent. Such a change seemed impossible; and, starting up, Caroline approached the bed to ascertain if she was not deceived.

One glance was sufficient: pale as the

pillow on which his head reclined, with eyes closed, and lips strongly pressed together, as if through them utterance would never be heard again, Graham lay before her! The benevolent expression of countenance, which neither pain nor sorrow could subdue, was not to be mistaken. Caroline sighed heavily; and, dropping the curtain, stepped back a few paces, when, falling on her knees, she offered a prayer of mental and humble supplication to Almighty God for his restoration. As she concluded, her eyes turned towards the bed, and she beheld the curtain drawn back, and him for whom her prayers were offered, earnestly regarding her.

"Is this a dream," he said in a hollow voice, "or do I indeed behold Caroline Delamore?"

Caroline trembled.—"Lord Delamore it is by his desire I am here—told

me to summon him if you awoke.—But," she added, drawing nearer to him, "tell me first how you find yourself."

"Better than for many weeks, for it is my wish to die; and my prayer has been heard to see you once again. But do not leave me yet—have you not forgiven me?"

"Forgiven you! Oh, Graham, could you read the misery I now endure, you would not ask that question. I never was offended, so cannot forgive. But think not of death; you will live to know many happy days yet." As she spoke, the tears rushed down Caroline's cheeks, as if to belie her words.

Graham smiled mournfully.—"My recovery, I am aware, must be doubtful; it is as well, perhaps, as it is. Those tears are grateful to my heart; they show me that when I am dead, you will sometimes think of him that is

gone; and when the remembrance has faded from all other minds, you will not forget him whom then you may think of without a crime."

"Forget you!" exclaimed Caroline, throwing herself on her knees by the bed. "Can I ever forget my truest friend?—the only being on earth who feels an interest in my fate, for whom alone I desire to live, without whom the cold, unfeeling, heartless world will be a blank indeed.—Oh! Graham, had we never met again, I should have breathed the same air, gazed on the same sky;—but such a separation as this—the separation of death———"

Caroline could say no more; she hid her face in her hands, and wept aloud.—Graham, in a low and feeble voice, implored her to be calm. "It is to be hoped we do not part eternally, dearest Lady Delamore: you have much to live

for. Delamore has a thousand good qualities; your little boy needs your care; and you have a friend in Miss Fitz-Edward whom few can boast. Do not regret my fate, but rather rejoice that I am removed from a scene of temptation and suffering. When I think of the wild passion I betrayed in my last interview —of the impious wishes I have, I fear, too often indulged, wishing—with shame I acknowledge it—that you, dearest Caroline, were less virtuous, and that your passions were wild and ungovernable as my own—when such recollections recur to my mind, I feel I am justly punished in being cut off in the prime of life, and also most mercifully, for had we met again with feelings such as in our last interview—" Graham's voice became thick —Caroline listened, hardly daring to breathe, for fear of losing a word he said —" I am faint—the hand of death is on

me—Caroline, where are you? let me gaze on your countenance once again—draw nearer, I implore—it is vain—a mist is before my eyes—God bless you."

The hand which Graham had clasped in his was loosened from his grasp, and he sank back senseless on the pillow. Caroline uttered a piercing scream. Starting from her knees, she turned round to fly for aid, and beheld standing a few paces from her, with folded arms, and as if petrified with astonishment, Lord Delamore!

She saw no more, for the next moment she lay lifeless at his feet.

CHAPTER II.

It is not difficult to account for the appearance of Lord Delamore in Mr. Graham's room. Sleep, when most courted, is sometimes most reluctant to obey the summons; and, though oppressed with fatigue, it was in vain that Lord Delamore attempted to close his eyes. He had flung himself on his bed, but became restless and uneasy; every noise startled him; and at length he became so decidedly awake, in spite of his efforts to steep his senses in forgetfulness, that he could no longer remain

where he was, and he descended to Graham's room, with the intention of resuming his station by his bedside. Fearful of disturbing him, he approached, hardly daring to breathe; and, opening gently the door, entered the darkened room with a noiseless step. The faint voice of Graham met his ear in the quiet of the chamber. It was interrupted by his own weakness, and the convulsive sobs of Caroline, whom Lord Delamore at length discovered kneeling by the side of the bed, in an act of devotion as he imagined, and he felt pleased that such should be the case. But the tenour of their conversation soon undeceived him, and opened his eyes to what no power on earth but the evidence of his own senses could have induced him to credit.

Though Lord Delamore did not marry for love, he was more attached to

his wife than either she, or any one else, gave him credit for. He was also jealous of his honour, which, though nothing could have induced him to acknowledge as much to herself, he thought as safe in his wife's keeping, as in his own. His affection for Graham has been already described: what then were his feelings when he heard Caroline declare that life was valueless without him, who, in his turn, and not for the first time, did not scruple to profess for her the most violent passion? Unconscious of his presence, they continued their discourse, which, till Caroline's lifeless form lay extended at his feet, convincing him of its reality, appeared to Lord Delamore only the substance of a dream.

Several minutes elapsed. Lord Delamore looking first at Caroline, then at Graham, whose insensibility happily saved him from witnessing what had

passed, which, had he known it, would probably have brought all his faults and sorrows to a final close.

A violent ringing at the house-bell, and voices in the yard, aroused Lord Delamore, who hastily raising Caroline from the ground, carried her past the wondering Mrs. Evans, whom he met upon the stairs, to the room he had lately quitted; where, placing her on the bed, he summoned her maid to her assistance, and himself returned to Graham's room, where Mr. A—— and Roberts, Mr. Graham's valet, (for it was they who had arrived,) already were. Graham was just beginning to revive, and looked wildly round the room, as if in search of some one else. Doctor A—— soon pronounced (which excited no surprise in Lord Delamore), that he had a great deal more fever than in the morning, and that unless the most decisive

measures were adopted, he would not answer for the consequences. He proposed watching him himself the remainder of the night; and, as absolute quiet was necessary, he requested that no one else should be in the room but Roberts.

This proposition was extremely agreeable to Lord Delamore, who availed himself of it instantly, ordering candles, pen, ink, and paper, to be carried into the sitting-room which Caroline had occupied the former part of the evening, and where he determined to pass the night. To escape a certain inquisitive glance of Mrs. Evans at this arrangement, he took the trouble of informing her that he had letters of importance to write, which must be finished before the morning.

Vanity was the prevailing foible in Lord Delamore's character. Educated at home, without any companions of his

own age, without any competitor, and with a thousand qualities, personal and mental, to excite admiration; idolized by his parents; flattered and loved by all around, from his earliest years he considered himself superior to the rest of the world. Happily, though vain, he was good-natured; and had sense and feeling, which prevented his becoming an entire victim to feelings of self-importance. Still his good qualities did not prevent his feelings from having occasional ascendancy over his mind. The world, which in most cases does so much for characters of his stamp, could do nothing for him, but increase the evil; for the world flattered and caressed him as much as his own family. His talents and personal advantages excited admiration, and confirmed Lord Delamore's opinion of his own superiority,—a fact

which required neither confirmation nor denial.

In truth, his vanity was not of an offensive kind; it rendered him neither ostentatious nor ambitious; he was reserved, and somewhat even in youth austere, but free in those days from harshness or illiberality. Nothing but vanity could have induced him to marry Caroline; so highly did he rate his own superiority, that he was convinced, in the simplicity of his heart, that the being *his* wife was quite honour and happiness sufficient to compensate for the absence of what is usually, in the common run of life, considered a requisite in the outset of a matrimonial career,—love. The discovery, therefore, of Caroline's indifference was cruelly wounding to his self-love; and, to do him justice, to better feelings also: but this was nothing to the

mortification he experienced in reflecting on Graham's conduct. His grief at his friend's behaviour almost amounted to despair. To be deceived in him whom he had thought worthy of making his most beloved friend,—from whom he never concealed a thought,—whom he considered, next to himself, the most perfect being in existence,—to whose censure alone he would listen,—whose praise alone he desired to obtain,—for the welfare of whom he would have sacrificed his own;—and this man had stolen from him the affections of his wife, had profited by the intimacy which his friendhip allowed, to view with lawless eyes one whom every honourable and virtuous tie forbade him to think of.

"Oh, Heaven!" exclaimed Lord Delamore, "to what crimes might not their passion have led them?"—and, in the torture of his heart, he wept bitterly.

His proud, unbending spirit was subdued. Had Caroline seen his anguish, she might have pardoned all his neglect and coldness; and had the spirit of revenge actuated her conduct, she might have been satisfied with his present humiliation.

The distress of Lord Delamore excited the notice of Mrs. Evans, who occupied the room adjoining, and who, somewhat astonished at his sitting up all night, and at Lady Delamore's fainting-fit and wild expressions in Mr. Graham's room, had her curiosity so much aroused, as, in hopes of discovering a little more of the private politics of the family whom chance had made her inmates, to venture on entering the apartment to which Lord Delamore had retired. He started up on Mrs. Evans's entrance, demanding, angrily, what she wanted.

"I beg pardon, my Lord; I thought

you might be ill, hearing you groan so piteously:—shall I call her Ladyship? though, to be sure, she is but poorly herself, and in no state to be disturbed. And poor Mr. Graham too!—Oh, dear! oh, dear! what a house of sorrow our's is!"—and Mrs. Evans tried to squeeze out a tear from the corner of her black eyes, to appease the wrathful glances which flashed from Lord Delamore at her intrusion.

"Leave the room, if this is all you have to say," said he in a voice of thunder.

"Oh! my Lord, be gentle, I beg; remember, poor Mr. Graham is close by, and may be disturbed by your voice."

"Curse Mr. Graham!" exclaimed Lord Delamore.

Mrs. Evans started backwards. Could she have heard aright? The gentle, smooth-tongued Lord Delamore had

actually uttered a malediction against the incomparable Mr. Graham. Lord Delamore did not seem in a humour, however, to recall his words; and Mrs. Evans, after awaiting a few minutes for them to be explained, thought it best to quit the room for fear of having the same anathema pronounced against herself.

The next morning, at an early hour, the following note was put into Caroline's hands:—

"Unintentionally I discovered this night what no evidence but that of my own senses could have made me give a shadow of credit to; but having discovered the secret, our meeting again is impossible. As the last request I shall probably ever make you, you will oblige me by returning instantly to Highwood, where, from myself or a third person, I

shall again trouble you with a letter. I have given orders for the carriage to be in readiness.

DELAMORE."

Caroline had no alternative but to obey this chilling epistle. With slow and trembling steps she attended the announcement which speedily followed, of the carriage being at the door. No one appeared but Mrs. Evans to take leave; and Caroline, hastily returning her parting compliments, was conveyed quickly away from a house containing her enraged husband and dying lover.

The anxiety Lady Delamore felt at the state of Mr. Graham, in some measure diverted her mind from her own particular grief, and she thought less of the discovery Lord Delamore had made, than of the loss or danger of her friend. When, however, she descended at High-

wood, and saw the gaping servants wondering around, and heard the little boy inquire for his father, the change in her situation since the day before, and the possible consequences which might ensue, flashed upon her mind; she snatched her boy to her heart, and, rushing into the nearest room, covered him with caresses; whilst she secretly prayed, that however Lord Delamore might visit upon her her indiscretions, he would not crush her to the earth by separating her from her child.

Elliot, who was of a tender disposition, seeing his mother weep, was moved to sorrow also; and throwing his arms round her neck, concealed his face on her shoulder, which he moistened with his tears. This sympathy in her darling child was more than Caroline's nerves could bear: she pressed him in her arms, and almost screamed with ter-

ror when the door was opened, as she thought it might be some one from Lord Delamore come to tear her child from her. It was the nurse, an old and faithful servant, who came to offer her advice and assistance, hearing her lady had returned home unwell. Caroline had need of tenderness and care; she had not closed her eyes the preceding night, and her head ached violently. She readily consented to go to bed, and having swallowed a composing draught, sunk into forgetfulness of all her cares.

Several days elapsed, but no tidings reached Lady Delamore from her lord, nor of Mr. Graham was any account brought. The last, she flattered herself, was a favourable sign; for had he been worse, she imagined the report would have reached some of the servants, who would not fail to impart their knowledge to her. With regard to Lord

Delamore, she did not know what to think or hope:—in all ways her situation seemed destitute of any future comfort. The éclat of a separation, which she felt Lord Delamore might demand, was sickening to her feelings:—to be the talk of the world, and have all the idle and whispering and wondering gossips commenting upon her concerns, was torture; and, worse than all, she dreaded the malicious reports which would be with industry circulated, and which she had no brother or relation to contradict. But was it not worse, or as bad, to live on with Lord Delamore, who, always indifferent, had now an excuse for being harsh, and whose esteem would be exchanged for contempt? The happiest lot she hoped for was to be allowed to remain in retirement, under the plea of bad health, where she might weep over her woes,

and cherish the memory of Graham, as one amongst the many whom she should never see again.

About ten days after her return home, chance directed Caroline and her youthful companion's footsteps to that very spot on which she had first beheld Graham, after she arrived at Highwood—the lawn before the Parsonage at Branches. Most forcibly did the whole scene recur to her mind—his looks, his air, his smile, were all present to her imagination; she gazed on the turf which the dancers had trod, as if in expectation that again the music would resound, again the laugh would echo on the green. Alas! all was mute and mournful as the grave! The windows of the Parsonage were partly closed, and an unusual silence and desertion pervaded the scene. A feeling of deep sorrow crept over Caroline's mind,

which was most painfully increased by the deep tolling of the bell, which suddenly broke on the awful stillness of all around.

"Mamma," said Elliot, running towards his mother, from whom he had wandered a short distance, "let us go home, I do not like the tolling of the bell, and all the people in black are crowding out of the church; do you know, I am sure to-day is the day of the funeral."

"What funeral?" inquired Caroline, whilst a thought of horror darted through her mind.

"Oh, *the* funeral," answered the child. "Some of our servants are gone to it; and nurse said she should like to go also, only as you were so sad, she did not wish to trouble you by asking your leave. But Mrs. Wright, and Mary and John are gone; and Stephen, at the lodge, saw it pass, and all Mr. Graham's

beautiful carriages following; and he said . . . ."

"Enough, enough, my darling boy," exclaimed Caroline, gasping for breath; "let us begone, let us fly, any thing to escape that horrible bell." She did not weep, but felt as if suffocating; and when she gained her own door, sunk senseless on the threshold. The screams of Elliot brought the servants to her aid; she was conveyed to bed, and medical advice was sent for from the nearest town.

At a late hour Mr. Andrews, a little, gossiping, talkative apothecary, arrived. He was a kind of privileged fetcher and carrier of news from house to house in the neighbourhood, by which means he gained as many patients as by his medical skill. At this moment, though he did not doubt the fact of Lady Delamore's illness, which the servants had

any thing but extenuated, yet when he entered her apartment, he was much more intent upon describing the ceremony which had just taken place at Branches, than inquiring into Lady Delamore's case.

"I beg pardon, my Lady, a thousand times. I hope my attendance was not required instantaneously; I came the instant I received the message from your servant, which would have been sooner had I been at home—but I was absent. I was *obliged* to attend the funeral at Branches—so I hope your Ladyship will excuse my being late:—it was a very grand ceremony, I assure you."

Caroline sighed from the very bottom of her heart, and turned her head on the pillow to conceal her tears. Mr. Andrews continued:—"Mr. Graham knew her ladyship's taste; and, to be sure, considering the fine fortune she brought him, he was

right to give her a fine interment: if she had ordered it herself, it could not have been more to her satisfaction—so many plumes and . . . . "

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed Caroline, starting up and interrupting the astonished Mr. Andrews. "What are you speaking of?—whose interment do you mean?"

"Bless me, my Lady, Lady Juliana's, to be sure."

"Lady Juliana's!" screamed Caroline, sinking back on her pillow; "is she dead as well as Mr. Graham?"

Mr. Andrews shook his head. "My Lady, you are not well indeed; your thoughts wander, your memory is not perfect, your ideas are somewhat confused: we must compose you—a fluttering pulse indeed.—Mr. Graham dead! Poor gentleman! he is recovered.—Well,

you must keep your bed; I shall send some composing draughts."

"Send any thing," exclaimed Caroline; "but first tell me about poor Lady Juliana. I had never heard of her illness, much less of her death—how did it occur?"

Mr. Andrews, highly pleased to have a story to relate, waited not to be asked a second time, and eagerly opened his budget of intelligence.

"Her ladyship, Lady Juliana, was a lady who liked her own way, and accordingly preferred the attendance of a London accoucheur, totally ignorant of her constitution, to mine, who had ever with safety brought her through very difficult labours.

"The journey, it may be presumed, heated her blood; added to which, she went to the play the next night; the

weather was hot, and the house was crowded. On her return home she was seized with the pains of child-birth a month before her time, and either (with deference I speak) through the ignorance of her physician, or from her inflammatory habit, a fever ensued shortly after the birth of a still-born child, which brought her to the grave in four-and-twenty hours. Mr. Graham was sent for express the moment her ladyship was taken ill, and at the imminent peril of his life reached London. All was however then over; and, for a day or two, Mr. Graham seemed likely to follow: he however is now better, though looking shockingly—so pale and sad. His attending the funeral was thought imprudent; and after it was over, Roberts got him to see me. He requires care and attention, and so I told him; but he did not seem much to heed me, for he would

not change his purpose of going off to-night back to London; though why he would not stay and get a comfortable night's repose in his own comfortable bed, I cannot imagine."

Mr. Andrews ceased. Caroline could not answer him—surprise, astonishment, and something of pleasure, kept her silent—she remained lost in thought, and almost unmindful of the presence of any one else until aroused by Mr. Andrews' taking leave. When he was gone, and Caroline alone, her ideas became more collected. Lord Delamore,—poor Lady Juliana's untimely end,—her own forlorn state,—all vanished from her mind to give place to the feeling of joy and gratitude, which the knowledge that Graham lived inspired.

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Andrews was just beginning to view Mr. Graham's case in a more favourable light, and to pronounce that he had been more alarmed than the symptoms of the accident justified, when the account of Lady Juliana's danger arrived, and Mr. Graham's determination, in consequence, to proceed to London, made him again entertain the most serious apprehensions. They were vain: Mr. Graham departed, and continued to amend in spite of the various drawbacks which it might be imagined would have prevented it.

Lord Delamore was no longer at the inn when Mr. Graham left that asylum. He had ridden out, as if for a morning ride, early that day; but on reachingthe nearest post-town, he had thrown himself into a postchaise and departed no one knew whither, leaving his groom to return with the information to Mrs. Evans; a handsome remuneration for her trouble, and directions to his servants to remain where they were till farther orders. Much matter to ponder over, did the events of two days give Mrs. Evans; and if the reports which soon afterwards were circulated with regard to Lord and Lady Delamore, and Mr. Graham, could have been traced to the spot from whence they rose, they might have been hunted down to the tea-table of an obscure landlady in an obscure village.

As the destination of Lord Delamore is not meant to be a mystery, it may be

proper here to mention, that the end of his journey placed him at the door of the Reverend Mr. Villiers, by marriage his maternal uncle, a clergyman residing in Devonshire, and the only person Lord Delamore determined to consult on the line of conduct he should adopt towards Caroline.

Of all men living, Mr. Villiers was the least calculated for an adviser upon such a subject. From his profession and tastes he had never lived much in the world. It is not, however, the failing of age to be diffident in counsel; and poor Caroline, consequently, met with but little lenity from a man who saw no medium betwixt indiscretion and vice, and who viewed the world with the jaundiced eye with which even the most virtuous and well intentioned—and Mr. Villiers was truly so—will, when bent down by sickness and age, regard mankind.

Lord Delamore reached Mr. Villiers's in an uncertain mood, wavering between resentment and pity, undecided whether to yield to the impulse of compassion, and consequent forgiveness of a being who, deprived of his support, would stand in the world without relative or tie, or to listen to the dictates only of anger, and abandon her, who in heart had abandoned him. He quitted Mr. Villiers, determined on the latter line of conduct.

Caroline received a letter drawn up with legal precision, which decided her future fate. No word of kindness softened the intelligence that she and her husband were to part; ceremonious, cold and decided, was the character of the letter which, in some measure, released her from the marriage vow. An income of four thousand a-year, and the house in town, were settled upon her, with the

care of her boy—who was immediately to be placed at school—during the holidays. No attempt at advice was hinted at, no line pointed out as most proper for her to pursue; she seemed unworthy such consideration; she was left to her own guidance, or rather to the guidance of her own heart; but her heart, though tender, could listen to the voice of reason; and the very abandonment of her state, made Caroline the more resolute to show the world, by her conduct, how little merited was the severity of her treatment.

Such reflections, however, were only the fruit of her calmer hours: at first, for a little moment, wounded pride and anger were the predominant feelings which Lord Delamore's letter excited; which dried the tears that started to her eyes at the sight of his handwriting, and banished all the kindlier feelings

which an impartial review of all that had passed, had awakened in a bosom ever ready to extenuate the faults of others, and judge harshly of her own; whose heart a gentle word or look might move.

It is necessary now to return to Graham, and leave Caroline to solitude and sorrow. The various events which had lately occupied Mr. Graham's mind, were of such great magnitude, that the impression of Lord Delamore's sudden departure from Mrs. Evans's inn, made hardly a subject for the consideration of a moment, more particularly as, all things considered, he was the last person he wished to hear from or meet. On his return to London after his wife's funeral, he established himself at his sister's with his children. Respect for the memory of Lady Juliana, his own feelings and slowly recovering health, kept him

secluded from society; the events of the world were therefore only known to him through the medium of his sister and Lord St. John, the only two persons he saw.

One evening, about a fortnight after his return to London, as he was sitting by the fire meditating upon his future plans, Lady St. John entered from her morning drive. She looked gravely; but, not being in the habit of concealment, was hardly in the room ere she unfolded to her astonished brother the intelligence of which she was full, and which was the cause of her dejected air.

"My dear Charles, I have heard such a shocking report,—it cannot be true—yet it is very strange for people to invent such things; but you probably know all about it, for Lord Delamore is concerned in it;—in short, they say that

Lord and Lady Delamore are to be parted."

"Parted!" exclaimed Graham.

"Yes; and in order to have a plausible reason for leaving her, Lord Delamore is appointed minister at B——. Lady Delamore does not accompany him:—But, my dear Charles, how pale you look!—I am afraid this news affects you,—how pale you look!—it cannot be true,—you would have been the first person Lord Delamore would have informed."

But as she spoke, Lady St. John thought she read a full confirmation of the truth in her brother's countenance,—and she could almost fancy that in it was that which showed he was somewhat concerned.

"From whom did you hear the report?" inquired Mr. Graham.

"It was Mr. Harvey who told me. Mr. Villiers had written to him to inquire about the school at which his nephew is, in order to place Lord Elliot there: he said, family differences having arisen between Lord and Lady Delamore, which would occasion a separation, it was desirable to place their son at school, more particularly as Lord Delamore was appointed to a situation abroad."

"Gracious Heaven!" exclaimed Graham after a pause, "that a man should be so mad, so insensible, as to spurn a woman, from whom to obtain one smile, there is hardly another living who would not bend to the very earth!—Caroline—lovely, amiable Caroline! why were you thrown away upon one so cold, so unfeeling?—why did we meet too late?—But is it now too late?" He

started up, the colour rising to his cheeks.

"Charles, what is it you mean?" said Lady St. John, now for the first time suspecting the full extent of his feelings for Lady Delamore.

"I do not know what I mean; but I have long thought, and so must every one think, that Delamore is unworthy of his wife; but—but we shall soon hear the reasons for their conduct—it may be her wish."

"Did you ever suspect Lord Delamore of jealousy?" inquired Lady St. John.

"Jealousy!—of whom, pray, should he be jealous?"

"Oh, of a shadow, of course—every body is—but Hervey said he understood that a third person was concerned."

A sudden light broke upon Graham—

Lord Delamore's continued silence, Lady Delamore's departure from the inn, some vague expressions of Mrs. Evans's, were all now accounted for. Either his conversation with Caroline had been overheard, or she in an agony of grief had betrayed her feelings. Resolving, however, to discover the truth or falsehood of his surmises, he started up before his sister could detain him, and rushed out of the house.

He had not traversed many streets when he perceived the object of his search, Lord Delamore, approaching him. He seemed thoughtful, and his eyes were bent to the ground. Graham's heart beat high—they met—Lord Delamore raised his eyes—one glance, one scornful glance was darted at his once adored friend, and then he passed on without uttering a word.

"Now may every torment pursue me,

if ever I forgive that look!" exclaimed the infuriated Graham; "there are laws, laws of honour, and by them will I requite such conduct."

A coffee-house was near at hand, into which he hastily rushed, and from whence he dispatched the following.

TO THE EARL OF DELAMORE.

"Of no other man than yourself would I demand an explanation of such conduct as you have just manifested towards me, except in that manner in which one gentleman has happily the power of demanding satisfaction of another.—Tell me the reason of your behaviour—the world is full of strange reports; tell me in what I have offended you—and then let us meet, either as friends or foes; if the latter, let the time and place be as near and soon as possible."

How often has one moment's imprudence embittered the whole of a man's life! Graham's judgment, entirely obscured by anger, made him deaf to the voice of reason. Irritated at Lord Delamore's treatment of his wife, he sought him, with the intention of advocating her cause alone. Lord Delamore's behaviour aroused other passions in his breast: he forgot Caroline, to think only of his own wrongs; and in revenging them, he may, according to the opinion of the world, have done himself justice, —her he most cruelly injured. The envenomed tongue of malice wanted but the éclat of a duel to defame the little of poor Caroline's reputation they had allowed to remain untouched. Her story soon became

"The novel of the young, the lecture of the old."

Lord Delamore answered Graham's note, by simply naming Hyde Park,

at six the next morning, as the place of meeting; and added, that as it was impossible for him to deny the conversation he had held with Lady Delamore at the inn, on the night of the 12th of February, no explanation farther could be expected.

The meeting was neither as bloodless, nor yet as fatal, as many former and latter ones have been. Lord Delamore's ball grazed Mr. Graham's shoulder; his was more unfortunate, and entered the arm of Lord Delamore just above the elbow.

The agony of Graham's mind, on beholding the blood of his friend, it would be impossible to describe. Anger, love, were in a moment banished from his bosom, and replaced by despair. Throwing down his pistol, he rushed to Lord Delamore, with a countenance far paler than his friend's, and

agonized with a thousand fears as to the nature of his wound.

"I hope you art not much hurt?" he said in a feeble voice.

Lord Delamore smiled contemptuously. "So little so, I imagine, that if you are desirous again to renew the combat, I have no objection."

"Do you take me for a barbarian?" exclaimed Graham, as he tore off his neck-handkerchief to make a bandage for his wound. His intention was, however, evaded by Lord Delamore, who, taking the arm of his second, said in a faint voice—

"Our business here being settled, I may as well seek surgical aid for my wound; will you give me your assistance to the carriage?"

The speed of mail-coaches, velocipedes, or steam-boats, are not to be compared to the rapidity with which a

report travels through the streets of London. An event is hardly concluded in one quarter, before it is known half over the town; and what is imparted under the strictest charge of secrecy to one individual, is in an instant talked over by every body, though all are ignorant from whence sprung the intelligence. Such was the case with regard to the duel between Lord Delamore and Mr. Graham: hardly was the former safely lodged in the hotel he inhabited, ere the house was beset with inquiries after him; and at every fashionable breakfast-table, at the west end of the town, that morning, the whole affair was discussed with, of course, a very sufficient share of exaggeration. The event was too late for the morning papers, but in those of the evening appeared the following paragraph:—

"An affair of honour took place this

morning, between the Earl of D—a—e and Mr. H—w—d G—h—m, in which the former was severely wounded. Mr. G—m escaped unhurt. Various rumours are afloat as to the cause of this duel. We believe, that a discovery of a very delicate nature, in which a lady of great beauty and fashion is involved, is the reason of the meeting. Farther particulars it will probably be our painful duty soon to lay before the public; as a suit in Doctors' Commons must necessarily ensue, if credit is to be attached to the *on dits* of the day."

This enigmatical paragraph had its effect,—it was read and commented upon all over England; and the depravity of the higher orders was declaimed against very eloquently by those whose insignificance formed a very comfortable cloak to shelter their own *déréglemens.*

Miss Fitz-Edward had been making a tour of visits in the West of England with her aunt. Caroline's silence had somewhat surprised her; but expecting it would be satisfactorily explained when she reached London, where she concluded letters were awaiting her, and whither she was hastening, her impatience was not very violent, till on an inn-table the newspaper containing the before-mentioned paragraph met her eye. There was something in it which had an air of truth, most particularly when joined to her former surmises, and Caroline's unusual silence, that struck a pang to Lucy's bosom, as if a sword had pierced her; the paper fell from her hand, and she sunk into a chair.

"Good Heaven! my dear child, what ails you?" exclaimed Lady Mary.

Lucy could only answer by pointing to the fatal paper. Lady Mary glanced

her eye over it, and soon discovered the tale it disclosed.

They reached London the next evening. An inquiry at Lord Delamore's confirmed the truth of the duel; his lordship was rapidly recovering; of her ladyship they knew nothing. The servant's manner boded ill; Lucy sunk back in the carriage, and burst into tears. They were soon at home; to her eager inquiries for letters, none appeared from Caroline; but amongst several cards which lay on the table, there was one with Lady St. John's name upon it.

"That card was left this morning," said the servant, observing Lucy still to hold it in her hand; "her ladyship seemed very sorry not to find you, and begged to know when you came to London."

Lucy required no farther information, but quickly dispatched a note, begging

to see Lady St. John early the next morning.

As soon as Mr. Graham had ascertained Lord Delamore's wound to be trifling, he quitted London without giving his sister any information as to where he was going. Lady St. John had her fears and surmises upon the subject, which Lucy's note seemed to her somewhat a confirmation of: she hastened to obey the summons at a very early hour, but found that she was required to give, not to receive, information.

Though great was Lucy's joy at finding her worst fears were not confirmed by all Lady St. John had to detail, yet she had much to grieve for, in knowing that her dear Caroline would be the mark at which the censorious would point their finger. To be pitied and condemned by the good, and talked lightly of by the bad, was in every way

shocking; but she was still Lord Delamore's wife—his true and honourable wife. In time, all might be forgiven and forgotten. After a short pause, her thoughts returned to Mr. Graham, and she inquired where he was.

Lady St. John coloured. "I know not—he is not in town; no one knows where he is."

"He probably left London to avoid the gaze of the world after the duel."

"Then why conceal his abode from me?—Poor Charles! I wish I saw any prospect of happiness for you in this world."

"Do you think he is so very much attached to Caroline?—I hope and trust for their sakes—for all our sakes—such is not the case."

"Charles will never be happy again; he loves your cousin, and, with or without her, he must be equally wretched."

"*With her*," exclaimed Lucy shuddering. "Heaven avert such an idea from their minds!"

"If such an idea has however entered their hearts, it is Lord Delamore who has to answer for it; he pointed the way. Did he think his wife was of wood or stone, without sense or feeling?—Did he think Charles was formed to excite admiration in no other eyes but his own?—Did he imagine neglect was the way to excite affection, and that you may place unbounded confidence where you care not to gain esteem or gratitude? If such were his ideas, experience will have taught him a bitter lesson, and a knowledge of human nature will be added to whatever other information he possesses."

"I would rather," replied Lucy with a sigh, "that he gained such knowledge from any other than his wife. Putting morality out of the question, it can never

be any woman's interest, for the sake of a momentary revenge upon her husband, to sacrifice her reputation for ever."

"Would you abandon your cousin if she were . . . ."

"Oh, finish not what you would say," exclaimed Lucy. "Do not, I implore you, believe such a thing possible; Caroline has principle, feeling, religion—she is a mother . . . ."

"But she is a woman—an injured woman, and not, as you say, an unfeeling one. But, however, as I think, in their present state of mind, an interview would be highly dangerous, I most ardently hope Charles is not gone to Branches."

"To Branches!" exclaimed Lucy. "Do you think he is gone to Branches?"

"Roberts, whom he left behind, is quite sure he is there; but what grounds he has for the conjecture I know not,

my brother not having mentioned his intention to any one."

"And is *Caroline* at Highwood?"

"Most assuredly."

Lucy burst into tears.

"Nay, my dear Miss Fitz-Edward, we must hope for the best. Remember, however, that my doors shall ever be open to your cousin."

CHAPTER IV.

Fatigued with her late journey, Lady Mary Walters retired early to rest, leaving her niece to weep and muse throughout the evening, and vainly to attempt to fix her wandering thoughts upon a book.

The monotonous cry of the watchman had called "past eleven," when a loud knock was heard at the door, not preceded by the stopping of any carriage; some one ascended the stairs, and in a moment the servant entered, and, to Miss Fitz-Edward's utter surprise, was followed by Mr. Graham. He looked

pale and harassed; and, after slightly bowing to Lucy, whom astonishment rendered mute, he threw himself into a chair, as if overcome with either bodily or mental fatigue. Miss Fitz-Edward regarded him with pity and wonder, and tried to prepare herself to hear, with tolerable composure, the confirmation of her worst fears with regard to Caroline; for that she was the subject of this visit, she felt assured; and, were it not for his appearance of suffering, she would have turned with horror from a man whom she could not but regard as the seducer of her friend. After a few minutes pause, Mr. Graham raised his eyes to Lucy's face with an expression so painful, that it might have moved the most obdurate heart.

"I hope Miss Fitz-Edward will forgive my unseasonable intrusion; but I could not rest till I had seen you."

"I am at a loss to imagine why—on what subject," said Lucy hesitatingly.

"Of Caroline,—Lady Delamore."

"Just Heavens!" exclaimed Lucy.

"Nay, be not too much alarmed,—she is well."

"But *where* is she?"

"At Highwood."

"Heaven be praised!" uttered Lucy fervently.

"Why," said Graham with a slight tinge of his former arch expression playing, for a moment, round the corners of his mouth, "where did you imagine she was?"

"I know not," answered Lucy blushing. "It is a long time since I heard from her; and...."

"And," interrupted Graham, "though you have not heard *from* her, you have *of* her. You have listened to the reports of the world; you trust not to your own

knowledge of Caroline's character, but to the opinion of the idle, ill-informed, and malicious; you have heard that she and Lord Delamore are to be separated; you have heard also of the accursed duel; and you, like the rest of the world, have filled up the picture, and rendered a rough outline a finished performance."

"Mr. Graham," said Lucy warmly, "you accuse me unjustly: I would believe no ill of any one, unless proved beyond the shadow of a doubt, much less of the dearest friend I have on earth. I do not pretend to deny that I know to what reports you allude; but, though they have made me unhappy, yet never did I credit them till, I confess,"—and Lucy cast down her eyes,—"*this* visit."

Graham arose, and walked hastily about the room.

"Miss Fitz-Edward," said he at length, forgive the injustice of my supposition;

but I am grown suspicious of the world. I came here to make a full confession to you; but I know not how far your indulgence will allow me to extend my confidence."

Lucy did not look very intimidating. Mr. Graham continued:—"I saw Lady Delamore yesterday."

"Heavens! You have been then at Highwood! How could you be so . . . imprudent?"

"Imprudent would have been a soft word, had I gained the object of my visit."

Lucy started.

"Yes," continued Graham, "you may hate me for the avowal, but the object of my visit was to induce your cousin to elope with me; but, ere you condemn me irrevocably, listen to me—hear my justification."

"Alas! Mr. Graham, how can such

an intention be justified? Nevertheless, I am most willing to hear you."

After a short pause, Graham resumed.

"I know not when exactly to date my feelings for your cousin. The first time I saw her was at the altar, when Delamore received her hand. He had described his intended bride (whom he acknowledged to have married only to please his parents) as indifferently gifted with either mental or personal charms: of the first, I was no judge; but my surprise was great at finding in one so lightly estimated, the most lovely being I ever beheld. Wonder at Delamore's blindness filled my mind the whole of the ceremony, to which feeling was added something of compassion, or interest, for his youthful bride. Three years elapsed before I again saw her: this was at a masquerade, on which occasion she was

the most lovely, the most admired, the most fascinating woman in the room. From a conversation I accidentally overheard between her and Lord Dorset, I was led to imagine that Delamore had as much underrated her intellectual endowments as her personal charms. In the course of a few months I had ample confirmation of this idea: we became neighbours, and I was hourly witness to Delamore's neglect of one of the most beautiful, amiable, gentle, and accomplished of women. I pitied her, and pity is nearly allied to love. In short, time passed away, and we loved: we were both bound by irrevocable ties; to part was therefore the only alternative.

"At our last interview, as we imagined for ever, I, for the first time, confessed my feelings. We met, however, again: I was supposed to be dying, and she was sent by her infatuated husband

to watch over me. A conversation ensued, which I should have imagined might have been forgiven by the most jealous husband, under such circumstances, and at such a moment; but the divine attribute of mercy is not apparently in Delamore's catalogue of virtues: he overheard our discourse, and has revenged himself most cruelly on his unfortunate wife. Not his love, but his self-love, was wounded, and that is an injury that Delamore is incapable of pardoning.

"It was not till after our duel, that I discovered how much it might injure Caroline. The story, in a moment, was in every one's mouth, with every possible exaggeration. Delamore was praised as a model of forbearance, in not intending to sue for a divorce; I was a monster of ingratitude, who had broken my wife's heart; Lady Delamore the most

depraved of her sex. Stung almost to madness, I threw myself into my chaise, and repaired to Branches, or rather Highwood. My object I have already informed you of,—that if the world made us suffer the punishment of misconduct, we should not be deprived of every consolation. I saw Caroline, threw myself at her feet, and urged my passion by every possible argument. I implored her to quit a world unworthy of her, for one who would devote his life to her,—who would shelter her from every storm,—with whom she should never know a sorrow which he could prevent,—who would never have a wish but hers,—a pleasure she should not partake of. She listened, wept, but resolutely declined. She could support misfortune, but not guilt. Her hope was not of this world only, and she looked forward to another, where she must account for her actions;

—'where the wicked would cease from troubling, and the weary be at rest.' But for this certainty, she might have hesitated; as it was, it was impossible: and were Lord Delamore to turn her from his door without food or shelter, she would never by her conduct forfeit the protection of HIM from whom she expected more mercy than from men.

"I was still on my knees, and, notwithstanding her words, madly enforced my suit, calling her my love,—my wife. Caroline started from me, and quitted the room. She fled my presence,—then, indeed, was I miserable. At my urgent, humble prayers, she again saw me, and granted me her pardon for my offence. It was then I observed her faded and altered appearance, her extreme lassitude. Since the fatal night we parted, she has seen no one but her domestics; with Delamore the whole world has deserted her.

"Miss Fitz-Edward, can you allow your beloved cousin to linger alone in sorrow, and perhaps sickness, without one human being to pity and console her? Can you think she deserves such a total abandonment? The reason of my perhaps unseasonable visit is, to implore you to go to her: the confession I have made is to move you to pity one whom the world affects to despise and blame; do not let my efforts be unavailing. Do not follow the cold prudence of the worldly-minded, but obey rather the dictates of your own native sensibility, justice, and charity.

Miss Fitz-Edward had little need of such an appeal; already was her heart with her friend; and, smiling through her tears, she begged Mr. Graham not to offend her by importunities which implied a doubt of her possessing the very

qualities he professed to give her credit for.

"You will then go to Lady Delamore?"

"Most assuredly."

"But when?"

"Will to-morrow morning be time enough?"

"Oh, dearest Miss Fitz-Edward, you give me new life," said Graham, seizing her hand: "if you befriend, support, and cheer the drooping Caroline, with how much lighter a heart shall I quit England."

"Quit England!" exclaimed Lucy; "Are you going too?"

"Did not you know of my intentions? I am going to join my uncle, Lord L—— in the East Indies."

"Heavens!—and is there no place in Europe which you can leave England

for, that you must exile yourself to another quarter of the globe, exposed to an unhealthy climate, and to all the dangers of a long voyage?"

"The voyage will be an amusement to me; and as to the climate, I trust to a good constitution and temperance, not to suffer as many have done. I have two inducements to prefer my place of exile, as you not unaptly call it, to any other. Lord L—— is a man for whom I have the highest respect and affection, and is in a situation to render my abode in the East, if ever, agreeable, and also advantageous, conceiving the latter to be an object to me as it once was. My other inducement is, that where the disease is violent, the remedy must be proportionably severe. Lady St. John has promised to take care of my children."

Graham now arose, and taking Lucy's hand, looked earnestly in her face, with

an expression which made the eloquent blood fly to her cheeks. "When I am gone, do not judge of me with severity, but mercy; and do not, I beg, as some would do, sacrifice truth to prudence, and by a mistaken act of friendship, seek to blacken me in Caroline's estimation, as a means of showing Delamore to advantage. Her love I can and will do without; but, to make existence bearable, I must retain a portion of her regard. —God bless you and her!"

CHAPTER V.

The two following days from those of Graham's visit at Highwood, were days of rain and gloom, which added not a little to that predisposition to sadness in which Lady Delamore, from recent events, had but too much cause to indulge. She repented not the part she had acted with regard to Graham; but still the warmth of his attachment was ever present to her mind; and the reflection would but too often occur, that, had she not married Lord Delamore, she might have been free to choose, and have loved and married him whom now

she must shun for ever. The desolation of her present state, compared with what then might have been her lot, would at times raise in her mind doubts, whether she might not, for such a man, be justified in abandoning a husband who had in truth abandoned her.

It was in such reflections as these, that the evening of the second day from Graham's visit closed in upon Caroline, as she sat musing by her lonely fire-side. The rain pattered against the windows; the wind blew a perfect hurricane, when, to add to the uproar, the house-dog joined his powerful note. The cause was soon ascertained to arise from the now unusual sound of carriage-wheels.

"Oh, Heaven preserve me!" exclaimed Caroline; "it must be Graham."

In a moment more, Lucy Fitz-Edward was in her arms.

"My dearest, dearest Caroline!"

"My dear Lucy, what happy chance has brought you to Highwood?"

"Not chance, Caroline, but design. Be not alarmed, but my intentions are of a very determined kind.—I am not come to pass a few days or a few weeks, but a few months, and perhaps a longer period."

Lady Delamore shook her head. "No, dear Lucy, that cannot be; I love you too well to wish you to attach yourself to one who, however severely judged, yet dares not deny that it was her own imprudence which has given the world some excuse for its malice."

"And I beg," said Miss Fitz-Edward, "you will point out to me who is not imprudent some time or other in her life. But whatever you think of your own conduct, or whatever the world may think, or I may think, I am

now come to take care of you, to look after your health, to be your companion, to instruct Elliot,—in short, to be your comfort or torment, as it may be; but stay with you I will.—My dearest Caroline," continued Lucy in a less gay tone, "talk not to me of leaving you; I never can do so, till the roses are returned to your pallid cheeks, and the tears fled from those lovely eyes."

"How delightful," said Lady Delamore, "again to hear the voice and words of friendship!—But, tell me, how came you here? Did Lord Delamore——"

"I know nothing of Lord Delamore," answered Lucy impatiently. "Some day I will tell you all about it; and in the mean time suffice it, that I know your whole story; it will be vain for you to attempt to make yourself out any

thing but the most amiable person I know.—But, my love, have you dined? I am famished after my long journey."

The dinner soon appeared; and when removed, and the two friends were seated over a cheerful fire, Lucy had little difficulty in persuading Lady Delamore to let her remain where she was, and as long as she liked.

The next day was one of mutual confidence,—all was told and explained. Future plans were talked over; and at length it was agreed, that on quitting Highwood, which, it had been intimated to Caroline, she was expected to do when Lord Delamore left England, they should repair to Lady Mary Walters, at Hampstead, there to remain till the time arrived for placing little Elliot at school. Mrs. Villiers had informed Lady Delamore of the place; and as it was situated in the vicinity of S—— in Devonshire,

a town much frequented for the beauty of its situation, as well as sea-bathing, Miss Fitz-Edward and herself determined on leaving Hampstead, to take up their abode there as long as convenient or agreeable.

As in the best-conducted narrative, whether fictitious or real, the introduction of letters rarely needs an apology, I, shall without farther ceremony, produce one from Miss Fitz-Edward to Lady Mary Walters.

S—— May.

"We arrived here yesterday evening, and are established in one of the best and prettiest houses in the place. At this season of the year, not one visitor is to be met with,—a circumstance neither Caroline nor myself are inclined to lament, the clergyman's family and ourselves forming the whole fine world of the place. Change of air and scene, I

think, on the whole have been of use to Caroline, though the parting with Elliot was a severe trial. As had been previously arranged, Mr. Villiers met us at Bath, to take charge of the poor child to school. I am glad he did so, for I think some advantages may arise from the acquaintance of Mr. Villiers and Caroline. He was evidently much struck by her appearance, and, above all, by her affection for Elliot: the harsh and dictatorial manner he assumed on entering the room, gave way before her well-bred, gentle, and sensible manners.

"On his first entrance he seemed very well inclined to seize Elliot as a wolf would his prey, without taking any notice of myself or Caroline: the child, however, brought us all upon speaking terms, by clinging to its mother. Sobbing violently, in which feeling poor Caroline in vain endeavoured not to

participate, he hid his face from the sight of that of Mr. Villiers, who, at length softened by his woe, relaxed his austere manners, and, placing himself by Caroline's side, was soon as assiduous to cheer her drooping spirits as those of the boy.

"A satisfactory result ensued:—the chaise which was waiting at the door for Mr. Villiers and his charge, was ordered to return again the next morning; this respite dried Caroline's tears, and brought smiles of delight on the face of the child: the next step was Mr. Villiers' accepting Caroline's invitation to dinner. He hesitated for a moment—perhaps the thought of Lord Delamore's *wrongs* crossed his mind, or he might prefer a solitary meal; be this as it may, he *did* dine with us, and breakfast also the following morning; and was so kind in his manner to Elliot, that the child de-

parted with him at length, without a completely broken heart.

"Mr. Villiers has since written to Caroline every particular of their journey and reception at the school. He added a little line, that an old man like himself, living the life of a recluse, had little to offer to induce ladies to visit him; but if ever we were charitably inclined, he could answer for an hospitable reception from himself and a maiden niece, who would feel herself highly honoured by a visit. Such is the power of beauty, that it has softened the heart of so ancient a gentleman as Mr. Villiers; for truly it was Caroline's appearance alone that conquered him, as she had hardly spoken before a decidedly favourable impression had been made on one, who arrived, we were pretty well aware, in no very amicable mood.

"This is all as it should be; for, though

I cannot bear Lord Delamore, and think Caroline perhaps a happier woman without him, yet there are disadvantages in living separate from a husband, and Caroline judges not so harshly of Lord Delamore as I do. I therefore hope, with all my heart, they may come together again; and I know no other person but Mr. Villiers who is likely to bring about such an event. If Caroline were ten years older, the case would be different; but she is now too young and too handsome to be left entirely unprotected. Her present feeling of disgust to the world will pass away; she will return to it again, and again be admired by men, envied and courted by women.

"I have heard from Lady St. John. Mr. Graham has sailed."

CHAPTER VI.

Amongst the many and various feelings which Caroline's deviation from the path of virtue (as it was supposed) at first excited, none felt more, though very differently from the rest of the world, than Lord Dorset: and whilst some were shocked, and some were angry, some were pleased, and some indifferent, he was mortified. His mortification arose from Caroline's having chosen any other lover in preference to himself. Affecting therefore to disbelieve the whole story, he threw himself into his

chaise, and proceeded to his father's seat in the country, there to conceal his chagrin, and be out of the way of hearing the truth of the tale confirmed. In Cumberland, however, it afforded more talk than in London; and here he soon heard of the duel, and of Lord Delamore's being about to leave England.

"But where are Graham and Caroline?" inquired the now impatient Lord Dorset of his London friends.

Graham was going to India; Caroline was to accompany him. Lord Dorset was furious at such an answer: the next post brought him somewhat to reason. Graham had sailed without Lady Delamore, whom he was supposed to have deserted.

"If he has deserted her, then will not I," exclaimed Lord Dorset; and, mounting his horse, galloped over to Delamore Castle, to find out the present residence of its once admired mistress. The ser-

vants had no directions to conceal where she was; and Lord Dorset returned home with the intention of setting out the following morning for S——, with a proposition, which, in Lady Delamore's forlorn state, he doubted not she would readily accept. The sudden illness of his father delayed this notable project; and for five weeks obliged his lordship, instead of languishing at the feet of a beautiful woman — a situation he was much more likely to fill with credit—to sit by the bed-side of a sick man, from whom, however, his thoughts frequently wandered to that little spot on the Devon coast, containing Caroline. To the high delight of his son, Lord Aubrey was declared out of danger; and as soon as possible afterwards, Lord Dorset set off for London, there to arrange his schemes. As in such affairs as that in which Lord Dorset was engaged,

mystery is not the least agreeable part of the business, he left his equipage in London, and proceeded in a hired chaise, without a servant, into Devonshire.

It was a fine morning in the middle of June, when Lord Dorset first caught sight of the little town of S——, from a hill descending gradually to it. If he had had a taste for the beauties of nature, his eye might have been ravished with the prospect before him; but of such pleasures Lord Dorset knew nothing. Turning, therefore, at best, but a careless eye on the boundless expanse of ocean which lay before him, studded with various vessels of all sizes and occupations, their white sails glittering in the sun, his eye rested on a neat row of white houses, with gardens attached, and which formed no inconsiderable part of the town of S——, and

where, not unjustly, Lord Dorset imagined Lady Delamore's abode lay.

After partaking of such a breakfast as the inn afforded, and arranging his dress with customary care, he sallied forth to reconnoitre his present situation. It was Sunday; and as he passed the church-door, and heard the murmuring of voices within, the thought struck him, that Caroline might be there. He accordingly entered, for the first time for many months, that house, which we are commanded to frequent, but to which habit, idleness, and inattention, as well as vice, render so many strangers. Lord Dorset, it has been before observed, was a good-looking man, and his appearance received every possible advantage that the aid of dress could give, added to an air of fashion which seldom passed unnoticed, or perhaps unadmired.

If such was the case in general society, it is not to be supposed that he walked up the aisle of a country church, two hundred miles from London, without attracting universal attention, and drawing every eye but that of two persons in the church, from their books to his person, more particularly as the portion of the service then performing being the Psalms, the whole congregation had every advantage of position to assist their observations. Lord Dorset stalked boldly forward, his gilt spurs clattering as he moved towards the pew containing the minister's lady, behind whose considerable person he caught sight of Caroline's more elegant figure.

Mrs. Jones, unasked, opened her pew-door to the elegant stranger; and, to the utter surprise of Lady Delamore and Miss Fitz-Edward, they beheld Lord

Dorset quietly establishing himself within the same small square space as themselves.

As soon as the service was over, he hastened to pay his compliments, and, in truth, Caroline, having no particular dislike to him, could not but receive her former lover with much apparent warmth, as a being of that world which she had not the folly to pretend she despised, or had never liked. Something, however, escaped Lord Dorset, as to the object of his visit. This was a greater compliment than she either wished or expected, and made the cousins agree, that it might be as well for them to be out for the remainder of the day, at a distance from home, in case his lordship should call, or that his words were not merely complimentary.

Accordingly, they ordered the carriage, and drove out, only returning

just in time to dress for dinner, being engaged to their newly-formed and only acquaintance, Mr. Jones, the rector of the parish.

In the little drawing-room of the Rectory, to their surprise Caroline and Lucy found Lord Dorset seated, quite *en famille*, with a fat, rosy, plain little girl on his knee, to whom he was trying to make himself agreeable. Lady Delamore's appearance, however, turned the channel of his favour into another course. The child was so hastily placed on the ground, as nearly to cause a tear of disappointment in its eye; and his lordship, with extended hands, gave Caroline a welcome, as if the visit was entirely for him. He expressed his despair at not having found her that morning:—"If it had not been," he added, "for these good Joneses, who compassionated my forlorn state, I should have died of chagrin.

But, my dear Lady Delamore, how well you are looking! How long are such charms to be hid in this *lieu sauvage?* —Is it in mercy to the world, or from any other cause?—Do not look so grave; give me but one smile, as kind as that you gave me this morning, and I will worship you for evermore."

This speech of Lord Dorset's, and a good deal more in the same strain, rendered pretty clear to Caroline the cause of Lord Dorset's appearance at S——, and she was heartily glad that no one else heard it, for Mr. and Mrs. Jones and Lucy were too much engaged to heed any one else.

Mrs. Jones had, immediately on their entrance, drawn Lucy into the window. "My dear Miss Fitz-Edward, I hope you will excuse me, but really and truly I am dying to know the name of this gentleman whom I let into the pew this

morning, for he walked home with me; and being so pretty behaved and civil, I asked him to dinner to meet you and Lady Delamore; and my husband has done nothing but scold me ever since, because I cannot tell his name. Said I to my good man, 'You may be sure he is a gentleman, or Lady Delamore would not have been so pleased to see him this morning.'"

"You need be under no fears as to his gentility," answered Lucy, with a vain attempt to conceal a smile: "he is Lord Dorset, Lord Aubrey's son."

"The Lord be good unto me!" exclaimed the astonished Mrs. Jones. "A lord!—Gracious me! who would have thought it?—Mr. Jones, what shall we do? This young man, whom I invited without knowing any thing about him, proves to be a lord; and there is no time to add any thing to the dinner. I never

will ask any body again without knowing who they are."

"A very good rule, Kitty; for some day you might have a swindler, instead of a lord, to partake your hospitality. But, as to adding any thing to the dinner, I beg you will not mention it. I suppose a lord, for want of a better, can eat a plain dinner for once in his life; and if he expects to find in the house of a country parson an entertainment equal to a nobleman's at St. James's, why he knows very little of the world, and will be none the worse for the information he will gain of the difference of conditions."

Mrs. Jones waited till her husband concluded, ere she again spoke; but her mind was very far from attending to his discourse, or profiting by his philosophy.

"I had forgotten Lady Delamore's man," she exclaimed; "he will wait, and

his livery is handsome, and with our boy we shall not cut so bad a figure; and there is the ham and the Stilton cheese my brother sent me, and——" Mrs. Jones did not finish her speech; for, before her husband could detain her, she had flown away to no less a place than the kitchen, there to make such emendations and alterations upon what was going forward, as might best suit a lordly palate, heir apparent to a marquisate.

Mr. Jones groaned deeply as he viewed his wife's rapid exit. He was a sensible and well-educated man; but, as is too often the case in his profession, after having tasted for several years, at the University, of the charms to be derived from the society of men of learning and manners, found himself, by the gain of a living, the object of his ambition, though not happiness, doomed to associate, for the remainder of his days, with the ill-

informed and vulgar, from which class his wife could not be excepted.

It is not improbable that at any time Mr. Jones's ménage might have excited Lord Dorset's mirth; but now, when some bungling attempts to render the feast more elegant were but too apparent, his lordship wanted but encouragement from her, whose golden opinion he was most desirous to obtain, to break out into open ridicule. Caroline and Lucy, though quite as well aware as himself of the absurdities which Mrs. Jones's discovery of Lord Dorset's rank had induced her to fall into by way of being genteel; yet were far too good-natured to allow a word or a look of support to Lord Dorset's attempts at being witty at the expense of his hosts. He consequently relinquished the design, after having paid Mrs. Jones one or two outrageous compliments on her entertain-

ment, which produced no attention from her husband, no smile from Caroline, and only such an increase of vivacity and assiduity from the beguiled Mrs. Jones, as to be quite troublesome.

As soon as tea was over, Mr. Jones proposed a walk on the sands: his company readily assented, and forth they sallied. At his urgent request, Caroline took Lord Dorset's arm, secretly hoping Lucy might be favoured with the other: this was not destined, however, to be the case; and Mr. Jones, whose walks were seldom enlivened by a companion of so cultivated a mind, appropriated to himself Lucy's conversation in return for his support. Mrs. Jones lingered in the rear, searching for pebbles, with one of her numerous family.

The conversation of Lord Dorset and Lady Delamore being of a lighter kind than that of Jones and Lucy, had a pro-

portionate effect upon their footsteps, and they soon far outstripped their companions. When they were so distant as not likely soon to be overtaken, Lord Dorset turned to Caroline, and said in a more tender tone than he had yet ventured to assume, "Forgive, my dear Lady Delamore—forgive what I am going to say,—but tell me, why are you here? What is the meaning of a young and beautiful woman like yourself living in such a place as this, with such associates as those we dined with—when you might be in London, admired, envied, followed? Do not look so demure—you cannot be ignorant of the interest I take in all your concerns: tell me, then, the mighty charms of this roaring ocean and these rugged hills?"

"Their charm," said Caroline gravely, "consists in their simplicity;—but, Lord

Dorset, if my taste is extraordinary, in being an inhabitant of this unfashionable place, may I venture to inquire what could induce you to visit it?"

"Lady Delamore, you cannot be ignorant that wherever you are, my heart is also."

Caroline laughed.—"I am extremely obliged to your heart, but I would advise you to tutor it better, and not to allow it to run so riot, as to give your body the trouble of travelling after it to so savage a place as this.—But, for Heaven's sake! my Lord, suit your conversation to time and place:—compliments are quite wasted here, I assure you;—our ideas are as unsophisticated as the scenery around us; and are no more to be compared with the conversation at the Opera in London, than the orchestra of the same place is to the cracked fiddle which formed the accompaniment to the

psalms we heard sung in church this morning."

"Ignorant as you may suppose me," said Lord Dorset reddening, "I am not to learn that rude, unsophisticated nature is supposed to be better suited to the voice of love, than the haunts of the gay and dissipated."

Lord Dorset paused—Lady Delamore started; and, not wishing to hear any more in the same style, turned quickly round, exclaiming, that if her cousin lingered so far behind, it would be better to return and join her.

"And by that means get rid of an irksome tête-à-tête?" added Lord Dorset.

Caroline returned no answer.

"To be sure, it would be a pity to neglect such charming society as that of *la famille* Jones."

"Pray, Lord Dorset, how is Lord

Aubrey?" inquired Caroline, not heeding the remarks.

"Better.—But tell me, Lady Delamore . . . ."

"Oh! I will tell you any thing when we have joined Lucy"—and Caroline flew forward and placed her arm within that of her cousin. They prolonged their walk for some time; but Lord Dorset had no farther opportunity of conversing with her, except on indifferent subjects.

The next morning, after a late breakfast, Lord Dorset, about the hour of two, bent his steps to the abode of Caroline: he gained the house, he rung at the bell, he inquired for the mistress, and was answered that she had left the place!

Lord Dorset did not faint; he did not even scream; but he looked what he was, —extremely astonished and grievously

vexed: for a short time he ventured to doubt the fact, and insisted upon entering the house *to rest himself.* The ready permission which was granted him convinced him that Caroline was not there; and he entered her deserted mansion, placed himself on her seat, smelt the flowers which ornamented the room, and sighed over the books which she had been reading, all with impunity and in perfect solitude:—no voice, no step resounded, to give strength to the suspicion which had crossed his mind at first, that her departure was merely for a drive or walk to avoid his presence. One good he gained by his visit,—her direction; profiting by which, he returned home and wrote the following:—

"Am I to feel mortification or vanity that you thus fly me, dearest Lady Delamore? Why, when the whole

world desert you, should you shun a man in the heart of whom you ever did and ever will reign?—who has no desire but to live and die at your feet;—who pities your misfortunes, adores your beauty, and admires your talents. When first I offered you my love, you neglected me for Delamore, and afterwards for Graham. These two favoured beings, where are they now? Notwithstanding all that has passed, I again throw myself at your feet:—as my wife, you may bid defiance to Delamore and Graham; you will have rank and fortune, and a husband who adores you. Your will will be his law; he will protect you from all danger, and has certainly proved the constancy of his disposition.—Do you remember the air you have so often sung to me, '*Et l'on revient toujours, toujours à ses premiers amours?*'

"Sweetest Caroline,—for I cannot call you by the odious name of Delamore,—listen to my prayer.

Your devoted,
DORSET."

Caroline returned the following answer.

"It was at first my intention to return your letter in a blank cover; but, upon consideration, one part of it seemed to me to demand some reply.—I pass over the cruel, the insulting nature of the proposal you have made me with the contempt it deserves;—all I wish to say is, that you have somewhat mistaken my character and situation.—I am not so devoid of principle as to prefer the dishonourable title of Lady Dorset,—for dishonourable I must call a dignity obtained in the manner you propose,—to the honourable name of Delamore, even

though the first—for I must credit your words—should give me a devoted husband.

"I am also not so entirely abandoned as you imagine: unhappy differences do exist between Lord Delamore and myself; but they are such as time may get over; which, were they of the nature your lordship does me the honour of conceiving, would be impossible.—I remain, with every wish for your happiness and welfare,

Your obedient servant,

CAROLINE DELAMORE."

This letter put an end to all Lord Dorset's hopes. He was disappointed; for, in truth, he loved Caroline more than he had ever done any other woman; and, notwithstanding the many he had enslaved, and the many who had enslaved him, still his heart had ever turned

to his early passion with a constancy worthy of a better cause. He returned to London, where, in the absence of Lady Delamore, Lady Molyneux laid violent siege to his heart, hoping to gain so fashionable a *cavaliere servante.* After some efforts she succeeded; the more easily, as Lord Dorset was resolved to show Caroline he did not care for her cruelty. He carried, however, his *dépit* a little too far; and after first amusing, and then scandalizing the world by his flirtations with Lady Molyneux, their history was wound up by a divorce.—As a point of honour, Lord Dorset married the lady.

CHAPTER VII.

New scenes and manners, a considerable library for a traveller, and much subject of meditation as to his mission, could not so entirely engross Lord Delamore's mind, but that England, and more particularly Caroline, would frequently recur to his thoughts as he journeyed towards B——. It required all his habitual self-satisfaction to convince himself that he had acted justly towards his wife; and, after summing up his wrongs with mercantile precision, the voice of cha-

rity would whisper that its dictates had been little consulted in their punishment.

On arriving at B——, letters were awaiting him from England, among which was one from Mr. Villiers, concluding thus:—

"Old as I am, I could hardly withstand the sophistry of your lady's smiles, or more moving tears; and I am obliged to confess the interest her winning manners gained in my withered heart;—what then must be the power of such an Armida over youths by comparison like yourself and Graham? I pray Heaven that her present judicious conduct, in retiring from the world, may change all ill dispositions of her heart, and, by giving her opportunity to reflect, render her worthy of obtaining in time your pardon for her errors."

In our present times of peace, the

vocation of a diplomatist, inasmuch as it is more simple, is more general, and requires not the display of those talents and energy, which, in more disturbed periods, must be called forth,—when a lukewarm friend is to be nourished into an ally, and strong professions are to be shown by actions as well as words. When Lord Delamore was appointed minister at B——, England waged war with a powerful foe, and had hardly one friend to advocate her cause, or assist her in the great contest in which she was engaged, throughout Europe. To secure, therefore, the most insignificant friend, was an object of importance, and Lord Delamore had instructions to spare no possible means to gain the active co-operation of the Court of B——. At first, all appeared smooth and plain: Lord Delamore's reception was cordial; his person and manners were admired; and

he was shortly on such apparent good terms with the higher powers, that the object of his mission seemed well nigh gained. But an hindrance did exist, and a woman's influence was exerted to prevent the accomplishment of Lord Delamore's wishes.

The French minister left B—— some little time previous to Lord Delamore's arrival; leaving behind, however, the person of by far the greatest weight in the embassy,—his wife. She was a woman famed for beauty and political intrigue, and in whom the influence, as was not surprising, was exerted for her husband's country against England.

"I must counteract this lady's designs," thought Lord Delamore; "but first I must become acquainted with her."

This was not easy of accomplishment. Madame de Valmont—for so his fair enemy was called—had lately lived very

much at home, rarely appearing at Court, at least publicly. In her own house, however, company were assembled every evening. The gay, the dull, the wise, the foolish, the philosopher, the spendthrift, the profligate, the soldier, the courtier, —all were at her feet, and to all were her doors open; but one description of persons were excluded,—the English.

As far as regarded Lord Delamore, this was not matter of general satisfaction; and some ladies, on whom his fine eyes and person had not passed unregarded, essayed their gentle influence to procure his admission amongst the motley crowd who nightly thronged Madame de Valmont's. The effort was, however, vain; she was inexorable.

Frustrated in his endeavours to gain her personal acquaintance, Lord Delamore had recourse to other means for the counteraction of her designs, and

the furtherance of his own. He listened, however, to the character the world gave her, or rather to that of M. de Walstein, an acquaintance of Lord Delamore's, who, in his description, was only the organ of the world.

"Where Madame de Valmont was born, bred, or educated," said this gentleman, "I know not; her appearance, manners, and conversation, denote gentle blood, though her silence with regard to her very early years might make one judge otherwise. She is beautiful, with manners soft and winning as a child's, concealing a mind of more than ordinary acuteness, and a very tender, very deceitful heart. The business of her life is politics and love, to which pursuits she has sacrificed every thing,—honour, delicacy, feeling! Not powerless at home, here she is supreme,—for her lover is the minister. He adores her, pardons or dis-

believes her numberless infidelities, and sacrifices, without hesitation, any secret of state to obtain the smallest favour from his fair lady, who grants to him at that price, what others obtain gratis! De Valmont has no reason to complain; his wife was a *divorcée* when he married her. He, on account of whom she had been divorced, was high in power; but, being encumbered with a wife, he, in due time, prevailed on De Valmont to take charge of his inamorata, by becoming her husband,—a step he has had no cause to repent of; for, through the power of her charms, he has since very much risen in the world; and as he has the wisdom to be aware that without her support he should soon sink into his former insignificance, he is very prudently deaf and blind to all her irregularities."

M. De Walstein concluded his ac-

count by telling Lord Delamore that he had but one way to defeat her arts,—to make love to her.

"What! convert the noblest passion possible into a political tool?"

"Certainly: Madame de Valmont does so herself. What better example could you follow? you might then foil her with her own weapons."

M. de Walstein was very desirous to see Madame de Valmont and Lord Delamore acquainted, and took every opportunity of praising the latter to the former. Madame de Valmont was, however, unmoved, and listened to the encomiums so lavishly bestowed on the English minister with the most perfect *sang froid.* One day, when she was provoked to reply, she said carelessly—"He may be very well for an Englishman; but I hate the English."

"How can you hate those you know nothing of?"

Madame de Valmont laughed.

"Why do you laugh?" inquired De Walstein.

"You shall know some day, but until then weary me no more about this *milor*, the very name of whom gives me the vapours.—I know why you are so eager to promote our acquaintance; you hope to see us fall in love with each other; but, believe me, your trouble is vain. If no other man existed in the universe, Lord Delamore should never be my lover,—the thing is impossible."

"Why impossible?"

"Ask me no questions, but be content with what I have said.—I wish to associate with no English, for they are a dull race; but I have other reasons for avoiding Lord Delamore."

"Then you know him?"

Madame de Valmont was silent: her countenance for a moment had a shade of thought—the next it was brilliant with light, as she received the homage of the Prince de ——, who entered the apartment with the air of a devotee at the shrine of his patron saint. De Walstein retired, and with him all idea of Lord Delamore fled from Madame de Valmont's mind.

Whatever men may do in England, abroad they cannot form a society to themselves:—they must associate with women, or live alone. Lord Delamore had therefore no alternative, and gradually, what he was forced into by necessity, became agreeable to him. Ladies will take pains to please a handsome, gentlemanlike man—much more so when he is of a certain rank and consequence; and from this cause, or from change of

air, (which has a powerful effect upon an Englishman's constitution,) Lord Delamore took pleasure in what he had for a long time lost all relish for—society. He therefore began to please in his turn; and could the deserted Caroline have been transported from her isolated abode to a saloon at B——, she certainly would not have credited her senses on beholding her taciturn and sombre lord, attentive, talkative, and, though rather in a grand solemn way, yet not unfrequently a sharer in the pleasures of waltzing. Caroline's interest did not suffer by her husband's increased acquaintance with her sex: the more he saw of other women, the more indulgent did he become to his wife.

"She is certainly more beautiful than any woman, here," he said to himself, casting his eye round the circle he now lived with; "and not so desirous of

admiration as these are; nor do I see any man to be compared to Graham, amongst the men. These women cannot exist out of society; they know nothing of the duties of mothers, or mistresses of families, or of the charms of a country life. Talk to them of books, they regard you with astonishment. In such respects, how far superior is Caroline to them!"

Lord Delamore's meditations were broken by M. de Walstein.

"My Lord, I have some news for you—Madame de Valmont will certainly be at the Prince de ——'s fête. She coqueted at first about going; and the Prince was in despair. A beautiful dress sent by her obliging husband from Paris, has decided the affair, much to the annoyance of many other belles who had hoped to shine in her absence. Of course, you will be there, and I will introduce you to La Belle de Valmont,

for I have some curiosity to see the meeting. I am sure she has heard of, or seen you before."

"It is not impossible.—What was the name of her husband whom she abandoned?"

"De Choisieul—he was a fiery hot royalist, and is now starving in America: his father and mother died on the scaffold; his wife is as you see."

"Poor fellow!" sighed Lord Delamore. "You could not have pictured a more melancholy case."

CHAPTER VIII.

When Madame de Valmont entered the ball-room at the Prince de ——'s, all eyes were turned upon her with an eagerness of gaze justified by the object. Beautiful beyond the common description of loveliness, her fair hair and bosom glittering with jewels, Madame de Valmont, escorted by the Prince de ——, moved through the admiring throng as though she were the Goddess of Beauty herself, who had condescended to share the amusements of mortals. Her eyes were bent to the ground with an expression entirely of modesty;

no wanton glances escaped from beneath their long lashes; for Madame de Valmont, bold and free as she could be when unrestrained and with those whom such manners were likely to captivate, yet, when occasion required, could restrain every look, word, and action, with the most scrupulous exactitude, and assume manners which a prude might envy.

Either from an affectation of independence, or, what was more likely, that Madame de Valmont did not excite his curiosity, Lord Delamore had been in the room with her some time, without casting one look to the spot where she stood surrounded by a knot of admirers. His attention was at length aroused by De Walstein, who insisted, not only upon showing, but presenting him to Madame de Valmont; and before Lord Delamore had time to answer, he found himself in

her presence, and in a moment the ceremony of introduction was over. Madame de Valmont was conversing with ease and cheerfulness when Lord Delamore approached. In a moment, a cloud seemed to overspread her brow, and she stood silent and embarrassed. Aware, herself, of her singular conduct, she aroused herself sufficiently in a few instants, to enter into conversation, but without her usual spirit and vivacity. Every body observed her embarrassment but Lord Delamore; he was far too much involved in the same misfortune, to be aware of it in others. It was not Madame de Valmont's beauty, her dress, her smiles, her manners—none of all these would for a moment have awakened any but the most common-place feelings in Lord Delamore's bosom; but it was the likeness that existed between Madame de Valmont,—the gay, aban-

doned Madame de Valmont,—and the guileless Theresa Greville, which raised emotions in Lord Delamore's mind, that he could hardly control sufficiently to answer the few short and trifling questions Madame de Valmont thought fit, somewhat haughtily, to put to him. In a few minutes, to the lady's evident satisfaction, the Prince approached to claim her hand for the dance; she departed, leaving Lord Delamore to the indulgence of his own reflections, which the image she had recalled to his mind rendered truly painful.

For the remainder of the evening, she alone attracted his attention; he followed her with his eyes, observed every action, listened to every word, and when he could venture, addressed her. Her answers were cold, short, and ceremonious —very unlike those of Theresa; but yet the voice was much the same, and in its

tone to others so much so, that Lord Delamore, totally unobservant of the singularity of his conduct, asked her abruptly if she had ever been in England?

"My Lord!" she replied, "you are surely laughing at me; you forget that no intercourse has of late taken place between our countries, and that a Frenchwoman knows as little of England as of China."

"And yet," observed De Walstein, "in China, Frenchwomen have been seen. Why not in England?"

"It is not *impossible*," said Madame de Valmont; "but pray, my Lord, may I inquire why a *Frenchwoman*, satisfied with the existing government of her country, could, in your imagination, have visited England?"

"My reason, I fear, would hardly justify the impertinence of my original

question, and would therefore only add to my fault, if mentioned."

"Shall I explain it, Madame de Valmont?" exclaimed de Walstein eagerly. "The fact is, Lord Delamore is very much discomposed at discovering, that France possesses one who can boast a complexion, and colour of hair, which his countrywomen lay exclusive claim to; and he would, if possible, attempt to discover some drop of English blood in your veins, from whence to trace that skin, fairer than alabaster, and hair of golden hue."

Lord Delamore smiled.

Madame de Valmont's countenance showed that the reign of blushes may still continue, when all modesty is fled.

The next morning De Walstein called on Lord Delamore, and began immediately to speak of Madame de Valmont.

"She was very different from what

she usually is, last night," he observed.

"Indeed!"

"Yes, she was more grave and absent. Somehow, I think your presence disturbed her."

"I am sure hers disturbed me," said Lord Delamore, as if thinking aloud. Walstein eagerly demanded what he meant. After some little entreaty, Lord Delamore confessed that she resembled a lady he had once loved, and who was dead.

"She may be a relation."

"The same idea entered my mind—but it is of little consequence; perhaps when I see more of Madame de Valmont, the likeness may cease to strike me; and indeed the characters of the two are so different, that I shall probably, on a nearer acquaintance, be shocked at ever having conceived any resemblance."

"Well, it is to be hoped Madame de Valmont may be of the same opinion with regard to you, for I am sure you are like some old misused adorer of hers, —perhaps that poor devil Choisieul, who doated upon and forgave all her amours as long as they were confined to the royalists: but when she could not be content without a democratic lover, the husband's aristocratical feelings did not allow him to be so passive; and his lady suffered accordingly, not for the crime itself so much as for her want of taste in its cause."

CHAPTER IX.

Lord Delamore now met Madame de Valmont frequently in society; and though the emotion her presence at first excited was gradually diminishing, yet her resemblance to Theresa Greville was as forcible as ever. Different as her ordinary style of conversation was from any he had ever heard Theresa hold, yet the expressions were often the same; and when she chose to be soft, insinuating, and feminine, she was Theresa's self. Some difference there certainly was. Madame de Valmont was on ra-

ther a larger scale; she wore a great deal of rouge, which gave a fierce expression to her eyes, which Theresa's had never known. Still the likeness was truly surprising, and Lord Delamore could not but imagine some relationship had existed between them. Whenever they had any conversation,—which was as seldom as Madame de Valmont could possibly contrive,—the name of Greville was for ever on his lips, but he dared not bring it forth; he would gaze upon her features as upon those of a picture, till aroused by the remarks of some one near him upon his abstraction, or by some very *libre* observation of Madame de Valmont herself, which would make him turn from her with disgust, and resolve never again to profane the memory of Theresa by comparing her to such a being. Such determinations were however quickly broken,

and he would soon return to the examination of her countenance, and to meditations upon the melody of her voice, as if for the first time the likeness had struck him.

The singularity of such conduct could not escape the observation of Madame de Valmont; and one day, when it was doubly annoying from his being seated next to her at a supper at Court, when her other neighbour, a dull German baron, had either from his ignorance of the French language, or devotion to the pleasures of the table, not uttered one word to her the whole evening, she could no longer command her feelings; and turning somewhat sharply to Lord Delamore, inquired if, in his country, conversation was carried on by the eyes, for he had hardly taken his off her the last hour, whilst his lips had been motionless.

Lord Delamore, conscious that he deserved such a reproof, made a thousand apologies.—"But," he added, "if you knew my reason, I am sure you would pardon me."

"Oh, I do not want to know your reasons; I dare say they are very convincing. I believe you English never act without reason; but I hope you will offend no more, now you know I do not like to be examined like a horse in a horse-market."

"I confess, my conduct has been improper and rude, and——"

"As to its impropriety, I care very little about that; but it is singular, which I hate. Singularity is what all you English aim at, and that is the reason I dislike you. You are all so singularly wicked, so singularly good, so singularly extravagant, mean, wise, or foolish, that you are perfectly odious."

"I thank you for the honour you have done my nation," said Lord Delamore contemptuously; "and in the point in which I have offended, be assured I will never be singular again;" and Lord Delamore turned to his neighbour on the other side, as if with the intention of entering into conversation. This was not Madame de Valmont's intention.

"My Lord,"—and she assumed her most winning voice,—"if you have offended me, I have now offended you, so we are equals."

"You have not offended me."

"Well, your nation;—and though I do not like you to look at me, I yet should be very glad to converse with you."

Lord Delamore was silent. Madame de Valmont felt determined to arouse him at whatever cost. "That china you are examining is very beautiful: the

view which is painted thereon, I conclude, reminds you of some similar scene in England."

"Whatever reminds me of my native land is delightful; but there is little at B—— which affords me that pleasure."

"In my face, then, which you have scrutinized so minutely, have you found nothing to bring to your mind that of any female in England? your wife, for instance, or mistress?—I beg pardon, Englishmen do not know of such things, —or perhaps some early passion?"

Lord Delamore raised his eyes with a look of contempt and astonishment. "You are right, Madame; you do resemble one whom I once loved, whom I still love; but it is only in outward appearance;—in other respects you are as different as light from darkness."

"Are you quite sure?" and Madame de Valmont placed a richly-worked and

highly-scented handkerchief before her face to conceal her smiles. "Do you believe in ghosts, my Lord? come, do not look so astonished; I am no witch, as your looks seem to betoken, but a simple, talkative woman; and, in order to excite your wonder at the strange coincidence, I must tell you, *you* strangely resemble my first—no, not first—*second* love,—he was a tall, proud, self-sufficient Englishman. He had a friend, who, though an Englishman also, I must confess, was very charming, but he was cold as his own clime; whilst my lover, who I cared not for in the least, was full of warmth and fire. This lover I was nearly marrying, but . . . . but his family made some objection, because my mother was not quite so perfect a dame as she might have been, and they thought bad habits hereditary;—and also I had another lover, whom I did not

hate . . . . But, heavens, my lord, what is the matter? you are as pale as death. I have said something to distress you.—Lord Elliot, pray speak?"

"Elliot!" groaned Lord Delamore; "the thing is impossible; but nevertheless, before I rest, I *will* know who you are."

"Before you rest you shall know who I am, but not here. Come to my house to-night,—nay, you need not blush so,—it is perhaps the first midnight assignation for which a virtuous motive could be assigned. Why, you hesitate; the word *night* alarms you."

"For pity's sake, cease such levity!" exclaimed Lord Delamore, "and answer me the question I would put to you."

"Not here,—not here!" answered

Madame de Valmont; "at home I will tell you all you wish to know. They are moving from table."

"Shall I inquire for your carriage?" said Lord Delamore, offering his arm.

"Presently. I have a person with whom I must have a few words even before I speak to you: wait for me in the ante-room—I shall not be long;" and away flew Madame de Valmont, regardless of the imploring look which Lord Delamore gave her not to delay the promised communication. In the ante-room accordingly he remained pondering on what had passed. After about half an hour, Madame de Valmont appeared; but leaning on the Prince, and apparently so much engaged, that Lord Delamore felt confident that her promise to him was quite forgotten. She approached; and just as she passed Lord Delamore, her foot became entangled

in her shawl; she paused for an instant, and the Prince bending to assist her, she said in a low voice to Delamore,

"I shall expect you at home;" and, the moment following, was again all attention to the Prince.

"Can that woman be Theresa?" exclaimed Lord Delamore; "it is in every way impossible."

The rules of decorum were not so strictly adhered to in the family of Madame de Valmont, that her visitor excited any astonishment amongst her domestics when he arrived at her door. He was conducted through a suite of handsome apartments to a small and elegant boudoir, where Madame de Valmont awaited him.

Leaning on a low marble chimney-piece, her full shape reflected by various surrounding mirrors, she seemed as if disengaging the splendid ornament which

decked her hair; but she looked pale and thoughtful. Raising her head, on Lord Delamore's entrance, "You are very punctual, my lord,—it is as well perhaps that you are so." Then tossing the emerald wreath she had disengaged from her hair on the table, she threw herself into a chair, and whilst with one hand she pushed back the disordered curls which fell over her face, with the other she pointed to Lord Delamore to be seated. After a few minutes' pause, Madame de Valmont spoke with a seriousness rarely observed in any thing she uttered—

"Lord Delamore, it is wrong any longer to deceive you; my conscience has much to answer for on your account. I shall not add to my fault by making any longer a mystery of who I am;—you were mistaken in supposing Theresa died; she survived, and is now before

you. The knowledge of my name is, however, a very small portion of what I have to inform you of.—I have much to add, much to ask your forgiveness for."

Lord Delamore raised his eyes to Madame de Valmont's face with a mixture of pity and regret. He sighed heavily; and after a moment's pause he said in a smothered voice, "Can it be possible? are *you* then she whom I have so long mourned, as the gentlest, mildest, most modest of her sex? — World, world! reason have I to hate you when such a transformation as I now witness has been created by you."

Lord Delamore covered his face with his hands; they were moistened with his tears.

"Lord Delamore, you must accuse no one but myself; what I am I was always in heart."

"Impossible!"

"Hear me and judge.—I must begin my story from a period long antecedent to our acquaintance. From my childhood—But perhaps you would rather not hear all I have to say now; to-morrow you may be more composed."

"Oh no; I beg of you, do not delay the recital!—nothing you can say can now surprise me;" and Lord Delamore assumed a tranquillity he was very far from feeling; partly from shame at manifesting distress before her who was its cause, and who, either from real or affected indifference, sat examining the splendid bracelet which encircled her arm, with a countenance which, though cast down, was yet so little apparently moved as to create Lord Delamore's momentary envy. Madame de Valmont at length continued—

"I was about five years of age when my father obtained his divorce from my

mother, who afterwards married Colonel Douglas. Being deeply involved in debt, my father was obliged to quit England; and, not liking to cumber himself with a child, left me with my mother —with her I remained till my eleventh year. It is not astonishing, therefore, that the early lessons I received were not very decided upon the subjects of morality, vice, or virtue: my governess indeed, whom my father had placed about me, attempted to instil into my youthful mind principles of religion and conduct; but they were so exactly at variance with my mother's precepts and example, that I never believed a word she said; in which opinion I was encouraged by Colonel Douglas, who made her the constant theme of his ridicule for her clumsy legs and regular attendance at church. On my father's great accession of fortune, he sent for me home to Paris,

where he resided. My mother's indulgence had won my heart; and I did not at all like the change of parentage: however, it was not of long duration; and on the death of my governess, I was placed in a Convent in the South of France.

"It so happened that in the Convent was a niece of Colonel Douglas; Mr. Bellamy, her father, being Consul in the town where the Convent then existed. She was rather older than I, but we soon became great friends; and whenever she went home to her family, which, from their residence in the town, frequently happened, I accompanied her. I had just entered my sixteenth year when her brother, who had been educated in England, came out to join his family. He was about nineteen, gay and lively as a boy of that age usually is, and tolerably good-look-

ing: his sister, however, considered him a perfect Adonis, and persuaded me to consider him the same, which I the more readily assented to, as in a very short time he distinguished me by the most marked attention whenever we met at his father's, which was usually two or three times a-week. He always contrived to sit by me at dinner. If we danced, Henry and I were constant partners; he paid me extravagant compliments; and in short, for the youth was no timid wooer, made me decided love. I wished for nothing better, and was enchanted at the idea of realizing the histories of those heroines of whose adventures Sophia Bellamy and myself had read by stealth. Through her medium, to render the similarity more perfect, I corresponded with my young man, and he expressed his passion in his letters chiefly by quotations from Rousseau and Vol-

taire, which filled me with admiration at the extent of his reading.

"This agreeable flirtation had been going on somewhat above six months, when the old Mr. Bellamy was, for some reason which I have now forgotten, summoned suddenly home, and, at four-and-twenty hours' notice, carried off his daughter to England; thus cutting off all communication between me and his son, either personal or by letter. I was in despair, when an unexpected event restored me to peace and Bellamy.

"My mother's health had long been in a very declining state, and at length she quitted England to seek, what she was never doomed to find, peace of mind and ease of body. After wandering solitarily over the greater part of Italy, she established herself in a villa on the Lago di Como, from whence she implored of my father, through the me-

dium of a third person, that I might be allowed to visit her. Mr. Greville had of late become very sensible of the value of a good name, and he hesitated therefore whether to consent; but, upon its being hinted to him that it would probably be the last mark of attention poor Lady Mary would ever require, he agreed; informing me, at the same time, that it was not his intention to restore me to my Convent, but, after my visit to my mother was concluded, to take me home. Change of scene, satisfaction in quitting my Convent, and pleasure at again beholding my mother, rendered my journey, as far as myself was concerned, a pleasant one; but how can I describe my felicity when, to assist me from the carriage, at my mother's door stood Henry Bellamy? I nearly screamed with delight. As he led me to the drawing-room, he told me that, hearing

of my intended visit, he had profited by his relationship to Colonel Douglas, to propose himself as a visiter at the same time,—an offer which had been warmly accepted by my mother.

"My mother's ill-health, added to her native indolence, induced her to live very much in her own apartment, and never hardly to quit the house: Bellamy and myself, consequently, were nearly the whole day tête-à-tête, without her ever inquiring where we went, or how we employed ourselves. The days of her own youth she seemed entirely to have forgotten, and to look upon our intimacy as of a nature as harmless as that of children: indeed, in most respects, we might well be considered such.

"Bellamy and myself were in the high arrangement of an elopement, and I had nearly decided upon the gown I should wear, when who should arrive, to the

utmost dismay of his household, not excepting his wife, but Colonel Douglas.

"Whether he had been informed of what was going on between his nephew and myself before his arrival, or that his quick-sightedness discovered it afterwards, I know not; but, that very evening, he taxed Henry with his love for me, and ordered him instantly to quit the house. The young man at first refused; but on Colonel Douglas's flying into a violent rage, and threatening to make his servants compel him to obey his orders, he was obliged to make good his retreat; and I, to console him for the humiliating necessity, let him know that, if he would bring a boat to the end of the garden, which was washed by the lake, I would fly with him to the world's end. This notable project was not doomed to be executed: its defeat arose from the arrival of an elderly per-

sonage, who brought dispatches from no less a person than my father, claiming my immediate return home;—the elderly personage, being no other than his housekeeper, was my destined companion, and was possessed with full powers to facilitate my departure for Milan, where I was to await my father's arrival to accompany me to Naples.

"I could not conceal my tears, though they partly flowed from anger as well as sorrow; for, miserable as I was, I could not be blind to the malicious pleasure which shone in Colonel Douglas's countenance, most clearly proving that to his good offices I was indebted to the sudden extinction of my hopes.

"Not to be tedious, I accompanied my father to Naples; and as to poor Bellamy, he returned to England, where he neither shot himself through the head, nor hung himself, nor, as I ever

heard, made any attempts so to do; but married a citizen's daughter, with a whole warehouse full of goods for her fortune; in looking after which, I presume, he has spent the period which has elapsed since.

"I had been three months in Naples, locked up as if I was in a prison, when I met you. My father, though he never went himself, made it a particular point, that I should attend regularly the church service every Sunday. You little imagined that under my demure air was concealed a heart already versed in the troubles and joys of love, and a perfect knowledge of my powers of attraction, which I was dying to exercise. My desire was soon accomplished; and I beheld with delight the impression I early made on your heart. But Graham was my object, and he was impregnable: his gay manners and live-

ly conversation enraptured me; for him Bellamy was forgotten, and for him I would have done all I once would have done for Bellamy; and for him I would sometimes display the languishing airs I played off so successfully on you. Graham was not in love, and therefore not imposed upon; and, the evening before he left Naples for England, he asked me, with affected gravity, if, in the report he was to make of me to your parents, it was my pleasure that my sentimental or lively character should be described.

"I could hardly help smiling at his manner, but answered unguardedly: 'Say any thing to prevent a marriage I detest!' Graham started: I felt I had said too much. 'You detest!' he answered. 'Miss Greville, if you speak truth, it is my duty, as Elliot's friend, instantly to repeat your words to him.'

"As I had no intention of breaking off my marriage with you, unless with the assurance of Graham's not being indifferent, I know not what I might then have done. I explained away as a joke what I had said. Graham was obliged to be satisfied; but, before he quitted me, he took an opportunity of informing me, that he thought me the most fortunate of my sex, in having gained your affections; that you were the most noble, sincere, and honourable of men. I listened with attention, and, seeing he wished me to say so, told him I would make it my study to render you happy; and, I must say, for a short time I kept my word.

After Graham's departure, I had no one to compare you with; I therefore became impatient for the arrival of an answer from your parents, and sometimes seriously uneasy when my father

repeated what he had said from the beginning of our engagement, that it would certainly be unfavourable. He was not right in his conjecture this time, however. The same post which brought your father's answer, brought a letter from Mr. Graham, which perhaps you may remember?"

"I remember it well," sighed Lord Delamore; "it was to announce his father's ruin and his own marriage; and from the moment I also remember the kindness you invariably treated me with, and which I imagined proceeded from the contents of my father's letter, not from those, as I am now to understand, of Graham's."

Madame de Valmont blushed. "You have spared me making the confession myself. — But to continue my story. From Naples we went to Florence, and from Florence to Rome; and we stared

at pictures, and statues, and buildings; and conversed with literary people, whom you and my father were always routing out from every hole and corner, till I became quite reconciled to the idea of passing my days in England, where there were no pictures, nor statues, nor buildings, nor taste; and had you taken a ship at Leghorn, carried me to England, and made me your wife, I know not but by this time I might have proved a very good sort of woman. As it was, we went to Paris—dear enchanting Paris! They did me the honour of admiring my person: I am sure I returned the compliment, and admired every thing I saw. I danced one night with the Comte d'Harcourt, the most fashionable man then at Paris, for he was a favourite at Court. Times are changed now. He admired me, made love to me, proposed to me. I told him

of my engagement with you, which I was hastening to England to fulfil; but if by some odd chance it did not take place, I would be his. He claimed my promise at St. Denis, on our return from London. My father would have postponed the affair, partly from a sense of delicacy, partly because he anticipated the storm which shortly afterwards burst over France. Neither I nor my lover would hear of delay; so we were married at the English Ambassador's, as we stepped out of our travelling carriage at Paris. Very shortly after, I fell into a bad state of health, and, instead of entering into all the dissipations of Paris, as I had intended, I was almost always confined to my room, during which time I saw but little of my husband. To do him justice, this was not his entire fault. He was deeply engaged in all the changes and events of the year 17—; his situa-

tion about the Court required constant attendance; and, it must be confessed, when a revolution is pending over one's head, a husband's non-attendance upon the sick-couch of his wife is not quite inexcusable.

"In the solitude into which I was forced, I had ample time for reflection, and would often meditate upon my wickedness in having deceived you; the more so, as I heard in a letter from England how deeply you lamented my loss. I became worse in health, and was considered in danger; and at length my case was pronounced hopeless. I now implored to see you, in order to confess to you my unworthiness of your love and regrets, to obtain your forgiveness, and to die. For, weakened by sickness, and devoured by ennui, the visitings of a conscience not then entirely hardened by the world, were most keenly felt: per-

haps also there may have been a latent feeling of vanity, which still clung about my heart, in the wish, spite of distance, ill-treatment, and decorum, of again seeing you at my feet.

"Be this as it may, we met. The agitation of seeing you, entirely destroyed all power of explaining to you my conduct. You left me senseless, and to all appearance dead: many hours elapsed before it was discovered that such was not the case; and many days transpired before the expectation ceased, that my dissolution might hourly take place. The report of my death, which had been circulated, no one thought it worth while to contradict. I was little known; and indeed, had I then been a personage of importance in society, my life and death would have been of little interest to my nearest relations, much less to those of a more distant degree of friend-

ship, when events of such moment were taking place every day, as to make every human being's feelings to centre in self or party.

"Contrary to all expectations, I recovered. Paris was no longer an agreeable, or even safe abode; my father and I left it in consequence. We resided some time at Geneva; but, the revolutionary mania still following us, we again changed our quarters. M. d'Harcourt refusing to join us, or even, according to the fashion of the day, to leave Paris, we proceeded to S——. Nothing could be more agreeable than that place; it was full of emigrants, who, forgetting all their misfortunes, laughed and danced with the most perfect indifference to every thing but the existing hour. My father's house and purse were at their command, and I of course, independent of the consequence which youth and

beauty give our sex at all times, a personage of no small importance. M. d'Harcourt remained at Paris, through all the reign of terror. His father was not so fortunate, and perished, with many others of his family, on the scaffold. M. d'Harcourt's escape seemed miraculous.

"On the death of Robespierre, and the consequent restoration of something like tranquillity and order, he sent for me to join him at Paris. My father and I then parted; he continued his travels to St. Petersburgh. Of late, my conduct had been very unpleasing to him; and he did not scruple, ere we parted, to read me a severe lecture on what he called the levity of my manners; to which I replied, pertly enough, that I was indebted to him for those inclinations of which he disapproved; and, being his and my mother's daughter, the being any thing but what I was, was impossible. We parted with-

out much regret on either side; I was beyond his control, but, nevertheless, found his presence something of a restraint, from which I was glad to be free. Four years had elapsed since I quitted France; the events of which time, it would be well for the country in which they were performed, could they be blotted from the page of history for ever. The full conviction of the horrors that had passed, never, however, so forcibly entered my mind, as when I saw my husband. I left him a gay, young, handsome man; fond of dress, amusement, and show; such as you must remember him,—such as all must remember him who visited the French court, just prior to the Revolution. I found in his place, for I could hardly believe it to be him, a haggard, slovenly, morose being, aged in appearance, ill-dressed, and with a countenance of woe, that might have

moved a heart of stone to pity. He received me with great tenderness; which was more than my father anticipated, and more than I deserved perhaps: his kindness may have been partly caused by a letter of credit for a very large sum of money, of which I was the bearer to him, from Mr. Greville. He complimented me upon my good looks; I could not return his felicitations, and cast a piteous gaze around the mean apartments I was in future to inhabit, most painfully contrasted with the splendour I had lately been living in. De Choiseul (for such was his present title) did not interrupt my meditations; he was alone occupied with the manner he should dispose of my father's bounty, which, in truth, though very foolish in a worldly point of view, yet deserves to be recorded as a proof of his devotion to the Bourbons. He retained not a livre

of the money for himself, though we had hardly a bed to sleep upon, or a servant to wait upon us, but sent the whole sum to the French princes at ——, where in all probability it was squandered in extravagance, for which we starved, and the donor forgot us as soon as the money was spent.

"Whether it was my English blood, or that I had troubled myself too little about what was passing in France, to be a very violent anti-revolutionist, I know not, but certainly I found my monarchical feelings give way very rapidly in the republican atmosphere I now breathed; and not being able to enter into my husband's wild plots for the restoration of the exiled family, I lived in constant dread that his political intrigues (to foment which, he alone remained in France) would be discovered; the result of this would have been a prison, which, bad as

our abode was, would have been rather an exchange for the worse. I was most urgent with M. de Choiseul, to make his peace with the reigning powers, and profit by his good fortune in being neither beheaded nor proscribed.

"Our disputes on this subject were endless, and rendered our home the abode of discord as well as of poverty. Tired of the life I led, I began to form connexions abroad; and, whilst my husband was dreaming of golden days to come, made the best of those that were.

"In the Convent where I had resided was a girl, remarkable for neither beauty, birth, nor talent, who owed her education to charity, and her popularity to her good-nature, which indeed rendered her the slave of all who chose to exert authority over her. By one of those vicissitudes of fortune which the Revolution produced, this person's husband,

whom she had married quite in an humble line of life, was, in the year I speak of, a man of power, consequence, and fortune. Having purchased, for nothing, a magnificent hotel of some unfortunate *emigré*, he there lived in great style, and his wife assembled the only tolerable society then at Paris. With this lady I renewed my acquaintance, and it was in her house I met * * * *. M. de Choiseul remonstrated bitterly against the society I mixed with; his reproaches were however vain: my determination was taken. I left him, and placed myself under * * * *'s protection. M. de Choiseul easily obtained a divorce; and, perhaps fearful I should betray some of his secrets to my present friends, quitted France for America. If such was his idea, he did me great injustice; for though I did not love him well enough to bear with and for him poverty, exile, impri-

sonment, or perhaps death upon the scaffold, yet I had a sincere regard for him; and if he would have listened to my advice, or that I could have been of the least use to him, I would not have quitted him: and as to betraying him, such an idea never crossed my mind; but, however, as you may think also, he had reason to doubt me."

Madame de Valmont paused: Lord Delamore, to whom every word she uttered was as a poniard to his heart, rose as if he imagined her story concluded.

"Are you impatient to return home?" inquired Madame de Valmont; "perhaps I am tedious, and you are sleepy."

"Sleep!—Oh, Theresa! can you never be serious; and, in relating a tale more painful to my feelings, more degrading to your sex, than any I ever heard, does not the voice of reflection and repentance make itself heard?"

"Most assuredly; and I consider the confession I am now making as a voluntarily inflicted penance. I need not have owned my sins; I need not have told a tale which has converted your love into hatred, unless I felt some little remorse for the life I have led."

"Then you *do* feel remorse."

"Yes, just enough to confess my sins; not sufficient to amend them. But do not look so horror-struck: I have still something more to tell you, if you are willing to listen; and though you think so ill of me, my conduct, as far as regards M. de Choiseul, admits of some excuse."

"The justification, I suppose, you would allege, is the extreme licence which reigned at Paris, and which made such conduct pass uncensured."

"Uncensured!—It was applauded. The liberality of my opinions, and free-

dom from old-fashioned prejudice, in preferring to be the . . . the . . . the mistress of an abandoned democrat, to the honest wife of an honest aristocrat, raised my character as high as in other countries it would have fallen low. But, I must confess, I was soon disgusted with my situation; and I was very much obliged to M. de Valmont when he afforded me an opportunity of, in some degree, redeeming my character. I married him, and we have done very well ever since. About a twelvemonth back we came here, where, contrary to all probability, I have met my old admirer.

"Now, my Lord, my tale is finished as far as concerns myself; and if you had any gratitude for the trouble I have taken in undeceiving you as to my character and supposed death, you would relate to me a few particulars of your life since we parted. You have a wife, I

am told; how could you be so inconstant to the memory of Theresa as to fall in love, or marry another? And how comes it that you are flirting away here, whilst your wife stays at home? Come, confess; follow my example and acknowledge your sins: perhaps when you have done so, I may discover that, though I am faulty, you are not immaculate. I am dying to hear that you have—not been an inconstant husband—for, from your horrors of my crimes, that cannot be—but a jealous, or a tyrannical, or an *indifferent* husband."

"It is impossible that any of my concerns can interest you," said Lord Delamore, "or that they can ever have reached your ear."

"And why so, my Lord? An able diplomatist has spies in every mènage, and how know you what I may have discovered in your's? Supposing I was

to tell you, you had an amiable wife, much more beautiful than Theresa Greville, which perhaps is no great compliment,—ten thousand times more virtuous, which may easily be; that this wife you neglected and treated with indifference, till, wearied at length, she sought some consolation in the kindness of a friend; and that you, in a fit of ill-humour, took it in your head to be jealous, and made so much disturbance as to separate from your wife, and to oblige the poor friend, by way of convincing the world of the injustice of your suspicions, to abandon his country for another quarter of the globe: and your wife you have left to struggle as she may, amidst every temptation; and to bear up as she can against the calumnies of the world, too happy to have the support of her husband in its insinuations against her reputation.—My

Lord, there is that in your countenance which shows me you are guilty. I will not conceal the authority for what I say: read this letter: if it is false, deny it; but if true, reflect that as you were deceived in Theresa Greville, so you may be in Lady Delamore. I have been the unworthy cause of misery to you—"

Madame de Valmont's voice faltered.

"It would be some satisfaction to reflect that, by opening your eyes to my real character, I had induced you to distrust your judgment with regard to others; and that you might, by making up your differences with your wife, be indebted to me for that domestic felicity which you once most erroneously imagined you might enjoy with me."

Madame de Valmont ceased. Lord Delamore took the letter in silence. It was from a French gentleman, an *emigré*

in England,—a person very well known in the best society, and whom Lord Delamore had some acquaintance with.

After thanking Madame de Valmont, in the most animated language, for some favour she had obtained him, with regard to his property in France, he continued:—"As to Lord Delamore, who was appointed envoy at B——, I know very little of him personally; for, of all the Englishmen I ever met with, he is the most cold and inaccessible. But they say it was a disappointment in love that renders him what he is. He was very much in love with a French lady who died, and he has been out of humour with the whole world ever since, and most particularly with his wife, a very charming woman, and one of the most lovely in England, and as amiable as she is beautiful. This lady he neglected, till, *pour se désennuyer*,

she commenced something of an intimacy with a neighbour, who used every now and then to visit them at an old ruinous chateau, where he shut her up, whilst he went a-hunting; this neighbour, Mr. Graham, is a very amiable man, and Lord Delamore liked his company as well as his wife did, till he grew jealous; then ensued a duel and a separation. Graham is gone to India; Lady Delamore, into retirement; and his lordship, to be Envoy at B——. Every body pities Lady Delamore; for, even in this land of propriety, no one now imagines her flirtation to have been any thing but of the most innocent kind; and, however willing at first to tear her good name to atoms, people are now forced to acknowledge that she has been ill-used, first from the neglect, lastly from the jealousy of her husband. The agitation he made about her preferring the

society of an agreeable man, to sitting day after day alone, whilst her husband went a-hunting, is truly absurd; and this is all the crime I can discover he ever laid to her charge."

Lord Delamore read the letter with attention; and, having concluded it, delivered it to Madame de Valmont. Still he spoke not. After waiting some little time, his fair companion, having recovered her spirits, said—

"I hope you are not meditating fighting the author of that letter; for, though I dare say there is not a word of truth in what he says, yet you ought to have mercy upon a poor expatriated Frenchman, who, I dare say, has not sixpence in the world to buy powder and ball, to say nothing of the pistols, which he must either beg, borrow, or steal:—seriously, however . . . ."

"Can you be serious?" impatiently demanded Lord Delamore.

Madame de Valmont laughed. "I am not your wife, my Lord, nor am I Theresa Greville; nevertheless, I can be serious; and I hope you will tell me seriously what you think of that letter."

"I do not deny that there may be some truth in what M. de R. says; but I cannot think of the letter,—I am solely occupied with what you related to me."

"In short, you can only think upon my faults; and not of your own."

Lord Delamore looked indignant. "Whatever, Madame de Valmont, may have been my faults towards others, *you* have no cause to complain. I thank you, however, for the history you have given me; it has opened my eyes to my own weakness, and to your character. As to

what other results may ensue from your communication, I know not; but so humbled and wretched do I feel, that I cannot but consider Lady Delamore very fortunate in being separated from such a being as I am."

"If Lady Delamore agrees with you, all well and good; but if she differs, you must and ought to be reconciled to her; and if you desert her, and she finds another protector,—for few women have strength of mind to support themselves alone,—her crime will be upon your head. You have a child, I am told: if a girl, remember my fate;—had my mother been virtuous, I should not be what you now find me."

Lord Delamore gazed upon her with compassion. "Theresa, you may yet be very different from what you now are; you have sense to know——"

"Do not talk to me," said Madame

de Valmont, impatiently interrupting him; "when my beauty fails, my lovers will fail; and with them will depart all the pleasure in life: a very different scene will then ensue;—a confessor and a Convent cell; a row of beads and a prayer-book. Spare me your pity; I am not worthy of it: I have no one to blame but myself. Before we part, however, and the morning light proclaims that we should do so, give me your hand; tell me honestly you forgive, and do not quite hate me."

"Hate you, Theresa!" Lord Delamore took the proffered hand;—"I cannot hate you." He gazed on the countenance he had once so loved, for a few moments; then, pressing her hand to his lips, he uttered faintly: "Farewell for ever, and may God bless you!"

CHAPTER X.

Two years passed away: Lord Delamore had long relinquished his situation at B——; but still he remained abroad, from whence he wrote frequently to his friends in England. His letters to Mr. Villiers breathed a spirit of amity towards his wife, which at first gave his friend hopes of seeing them again united; but, as time wore away, this hope assumed a more doubtful character.

Mr. Graham was rising high in India, where his talents had opened for him a career which promised to divert his mind

from the cause which had banished him from England.

Lady Delamore and Miss Fitz-Edward had again returned to the world. Nearly two years had they lived in retirement, shunning the crowd, happy in each other, in the means of performing good works, in literary pursuits, and in the cultivation of those lighter talents which smooth the rugged path of life. With increased beauty, and almost increased interest, Lady Delamore reappeared. The support of the wise and good, and her own discretion in living secluded so long from society, silenced the tongue of malice; and, had she chosen, she might easily have regained the eminence from which she had fallen. But times were changed; the greatest change, however, was in herself: whatever vanity she once possessed had fled, and she felt that, without the protection (though

only nominal) of a husband, she dared not place herself to be the gaze of the world, and, with the admiration of the few, to excite the enmity of the many.

The cruel taunts which had been levelled at her for only a slight error in conduct, made her despise yet dread the world. Society, however, she sought; and having now no one to interfere in her plan of life, most of her evenings, whilst she was in town, were devoted to company: an assemblage neither noisy nor numerous, but in which friendships might be formed, talents appreciated, seriousness not avoided as a crime, and gaiety indulged within the bounds of decorum. Lucy Fitz-Edward assisted her in doing the honours of her house; indeed it was chiefly for her that Lady Delamore had again become an inhabitant of the metropolis.

Singular as it may seem, the events of

Caroline's life seemed to have remained impressed upon Lucy's mind in a greater degree than on her who was far more concerned. A gradual change had taken place in Lucy's manners and appearance: she became pensive, often melancholy; she grew thin, and regarded the ills of life with that gloom which betokens a mind or body ill at ease. She was not a person to give way to, or obtrude, her griefs on others. The generality of those she lived with were little aware that her spirits were assumed, and that she continued in society to save herself from singularity more than from any pleasure which society gave her.

Lady Delamore alone was not to be deceived: being much attached to her cousin, and seeing her daily, she quickly discovered that she was unhappy; and as quickly, in the soft language of friendship, demanded her confidence.

The deep blush which suffused Lucy's cheeks, and as quickly gave way to the most deadly paleness, was far more convincing than a thousand words; nevertheless, she stoutly denied having any cause for sorrow.

"My dear cousin," she said, "you know I never possessed that flow of spirits natural to you; and if ever I had, they must have been washed away by the tears I shed at one period of my life. At that age when most girls are only alive to enjoyment, I had gone through a cruel trial: my character was therefore formed in the school of adversity, and cannot change in my present happier lot."

"But I do not talk of what you were, but what you are," replied Caroline: "though never very gay, you were always cheerful; though not dissipated, you liked society. In both these respects

you are entirely altered: it is with difficulty I can ever bring a smile upon your countenance; and the absence of mind you carry with you into society, plainly shows your indifference to it. To see us two, any one would judge you to be the deserted wife, not me. For a long time I supposed our retired life affected your spirits, and I flattered myself they would improve with our change of residence. In that respect, I have been disappointed; and I could have readily pardoned your finding our tête-à-têtes dull, to have been relieved from the anxiety I feel, that some deep and settled sorrow preys upon your mind."

Lucy was silent: Lady Delamore continued: "You once loved society, as every sensible, agreeable, and, without flattery, good-looking woman must do, who has no particular grief to poison all her joys.—Why then are you changed?"

Lucy tried to smile and to conceal her tears; and, after a moment's effort, answered with affected gaiety: "If I were all you say, dear Caroline, my conduct might demand explanation; but as it is, being neither very wise, nor very entertaining, nor very any thing else, I have an excuse for my conduct, which neither you, nor the ideal being you fancy Lucy Fitz-Edward to be, possess. If our life at S—— was too retired, this may be too gay: so your house at Wimbledon will suit exactly my fastidious mind; and when we take possession, you will find me as lively as you ever knew me."

"I do not want so much to see you lively as happy."

"My dear Caroline, my happiness rests entirely with you: if we are never separated, I shall be happy."

"And a husband, Lucy?"

"I shall never marry."

"And Mr. Hervey?"

"I refuse him, as I have ever done."

Lady Delamore gazed at her cousin attentively: there was something about her which she could not understand; she was half tempted to ask her if she did not like some one else. Whilst she hesitated, Lucy walked to the window; and in a few minutes their tête-à-tête was broken by the entrance of company.

For some time after this conversation, Lucy assumed an appearance of cheerfulness, which, however, did not lull Lady Delamore's suspicions to sleep. These factitious manners did not last long; and when they were thrown off, poor Lucy seemed to her watchful cousin in a state of more depression than ever. That love was the cause, she was certain; but the person, it was impossible to guess; and after thinking of,

and rejecting severally, every one of their mutual acquaintance whom she could bring to her mind, she was forced to be content to leave it to time to develope the mystery, or to banish him from her cousin's heart.

From the sorrows of others, she would often turn to her own. To a woman of refined feelings, the doubts which may attach to her living separate from her husband are not agreeable; and Caroline had refined feelings. She had also maternal ones, and she dreaded the event of her son growing up without the fostering care of both his parents. Woman is little able to guide the steps of man: she may do much in conjunction with one of his own sex, but little by herself.

CHAPTER XI.

THE winding up of a tragedy, a comedy, a sermon, or a tale, is a high trial of the talents of an author; without talents, how then is such an end to be accomplished? The weary writer of these pages (we will not allude to the weary reader) trembles, and would fain send them to the world in the form of a fragment, or proclaim them the posthumous work of some departed *genius*, whose *remains* alone rest to proclaim departed worth. Such a method, though convenient, has its difficulties: and the hum-

ble author of these lines dare not follow any other than the hacknied routine of advancing step by step, till the history stops of itself, at that period which exists only in a novel;—when perfect happiness commences in this world for the good; perfect misery for the bad. If such were the case in real life—if, after a few years of trial and suffering, every tear was to be dried, except when springing from misconduct,—and every sorrow to cease, this life would become too dear to us. It is wisely ordained otherwise. By degrees, every link is broken which binds us to the world,—this beautiful world,—to have existed in which, with all its cares and imperfections, no words are adequate to express our obligation.

Lord and Lady Delamore had been above three years separated, somewhat above a third part of which period had

been passed in such a situation of mind in both parties, as to require nothing but a personal interview for them to become friends; which interview not taking place, they still continued estranged, to the infinite distress of Mr. Villiers, who, sincerely repenting his former opinion and advice, was, on a more intimate acquaintance with the facts, and with Lady Delamore's character, led to consider her as "more sinned against than sinning."

For above a twelvemonth, little had been heard of Lord Delamore, and that only at long intervals, and then as wandering in that "land of lost gods, and godlike men," which the first of poets has rendered so familiar, so interesting to our minds—

"Fair Greece! sad relic of departed worth:
Immortal, though no more; though fallen, great."

At length Lord Delamore returned to

England; he came unexpectedly, and, on landing at Falmouth, his first thought was Mr. Villiers, and to his abode he accordingly immediately proceeded.

It was a fine summer's evening, when, rising from the luxuriant shrubs in which it was embraced, the neat front of the Parsonage-house appeared in view. Lord Delamore, hastily calling to the boy, who drove him, to stop, sprung from the carriage, which, he directed, might proceed to the entrance, on the opposite side of the house; and, with the intention of announcing himself, opened the garden-gate, and proceeded up the short gravel walk, to the front of the mansion. The sound of music suddenly arrested his steps. Mr. Villiers was a man of retired habits; a maiden niece formed his whole family; a woman, as Lord Delamore well remembered, as deficient in all accomplish-

ments and talent, as she was graced with every unpretending domestic virtue. It was therefore next to impossible that she could be the performer;—who then could it be? The painful idea entered Lord Delamore's mind, that an event, not highly improbable, had taken place, —that Mr. Villiers was no more, and that the present performance proceeded from new inhabitants, who were rejoicing in a house which for forty years had owned another master.

Lord Delamore was on the point of turning away, and recalling the chaise, when the sound of a well-known air arrested his steps, and, approaching with caution, he drew close to the drawing-room, whence the music proceeded. The air was executed by a female;—it was well remembered by Lord Delamore, and was one of the few which had ever made any thing more than a transitory

impression upon him;—it was a favourite of his mother's; and in former days, to please her, Caroline had frequently sung it.

As various thoughts passed his mind, he advanced close to the open window which commanded a view of those within. A lady was at the piano-forte; and to his surprise as well as pleasure, Lord Delamore saw by her side Mr. Villiers, whose venerable figure partly concealed that of her with whose performance he seemed entirely absorbed. At a little distance sat his niece, Miss Villiers, employed with her needle; and by her Miss Fitz-Edward, turning over the leaves of a book of pictures, with a lovely boy, who sat on the chair with her. Who the female was, who enchained the attention of her little audience, even to silencing the lively speech of a child, it was not very difficult

to imagine; and when she arose, Lord Delamore was fully prepared to gaze upon the form of her whose merits absence, and absence alone, had taught him to esteem. So true it is, that the good we possess, we rarely prize; and it is only when deprived of it, that its true value is discovered.

"That is a sweet air," observed Mr. Villiers; "and if I am not too importunate, Lady Delamore, perhaps you will indulge me by singing it again before supper. It is the fault of age to love repetitions."

Lady Delamore smiled. "I am delighted to have it in my power to amuse you; not that the air is of a very amusing or lively strain. Formerly, I sung it a great deal; it was a favourite of Lady Delamore's: I then used to wonder at her taste, but am now converted to the same opinion. If such be

the style of music which you like, I have many airs of the same description, with which I may perhaps render you as familiar as poor Lucy is. At S——, I indulged her with a very undue portion of the doleful, both in speech and song; but having amended my manners as to my conversation, in time I may also reform my musical taste."

Not a word of this speech was lost upon Lord Delamore, who, regardless of the alarm his presence, if discovered, might create, still continued at the window. The night, however, was darkening in apace, and the lights within prevented his being observed. As Lady Delamore ceased speaking, a servant entered to acquaint his master that a chaise had just arrived belonging to a gentleman, who would immediately be there; and to beg to know into

what room he should convey the luggage the carriage contained.

It so happened, that his present guests were a sufficient number for Mr. Villiers's house; and if this had not been the case, the unexpected arrival at any time of an unlooked-for visiter, was matter of no small distress to so retired a man. He arose in some anxiety, his niece following his example. The niece, however, made a more decided move, for she left the room to speak to the driver of the chaise. Zealous, but not discreet, she had on her return that to impart which she was well aware was most interesting to her audience; but she had had too little to do with any but the most simple events of life to be also aware that caution is requisite in announcing joyful as well as melancholy tidings; and, without one word of previous preparation, did she

announce the expected visiter to be no other than Lord Delamore.

Mr. Villiers uttered an exclamation of surprise; Lucy, of gratitude; Lady Delamore fell to the ground lifeless; when she revived, she was in the arms of her husband!

Mr. Villiers and Lucy now judged it best to leave the re-united pair to themselves; and, with the little boy, left the room, followed by Miss Villiers.

Half an hour's conversation with Lucy calmed both Mr. Villiers's and her own agitation; and he then began to bestir himself for food and lodging for his guest. The supper was to be augmented, and another room prepared for his niece, who resigned hers to Lord Delamore. All was settled: the supper was placed upon the table, with such additions as might best suit a traveller's appetite; and in the bed-chamber a fire,

which, spite of the heat of the weather, Miss Villiers had had lighted, was burning itself out unheeded. The little boy had retired to rest, but his parents appeared not at the supper-table. Mr. Villiers became restless; the sound of voices murmured through the door in too earnest discourse to heed the lapse of time; one, two, three hours, when the door slowly opened.

"May I come in?" said a well-known voice. Mr. Villiers rushed forwards and clasped Lord Delamore to his heart; he only released himself to approach Lucy, whom he tenderly embraced, murmuring in her ear his thanks for her kindness to his wife. Lucy could only answer with her tears, through which, however, she ventured one glance to ascertain the fact, that such a mark of kind feeling and unreserved tenderness could proceed from the former cold, guarded, little enthusi-

astic Lord Delamore. And secretly as she withdrew her eyes did she utter a prayer, that so pleasing a change might be as lasting as it was amiable.

"But where is your wife?" inquired Mr. Villiers.

"For this evening, she has begged me to make her excuses. My sudden appearance has agitated her; and would have been unpardonable, had I had the least idea whom I should meet. I thought only, Sir, to disturb you in your evening nap, to be scolded, and make my peace by recounting my adventures."

"Well, well; I am glad you came in a peaceable mood; and I trust all others are equally harmoniously inclined."

CHAPTER XII.

THE bubbling urn had long stood unemployed before Miss Villiers, who, in despair, had produced her netting, whilst her uncle, having paced the room till he was tired, began to be somewhat irritable at the delay of his breakfast; and was in perfect despair when the servant returned from a summons he had sent to the several apartments of his guests, with the information that my Lord, my Lady, Miss Fitz-Edward, and Lord Elliot, were out a-walking, and had already been absent above an hour.

Mr. Villiers groaned heavily, and it

required all Caroline's eloquence, when she did return, which was not for some time after the *hour's* walk had approached to two, to disarm his slight fit of ill-humour.

"But we have had such a charming walk!" she concluded, "I am sure you must forgive us."

"Your walk has been very charming, I dare say; and very long, I can witness: but, my dears, let this be your last reconciliation; for my health will not bear waiting so long for my breakfast another time; and I shall begin to be an advocate for war, instead of peace, in families, as rendering an old man of more importance."

The morning meal being at last concluded, Lord Delamore and Mr. Villiers retired into the latter's study. The confession which ensued, the reader has already been made acquainted with:—all

that need be observed therefore is, that the disclosure had formed no small part of the discourse between Lord and Lady Delamore, the evening before.

"So," said Mr. Villiers, when the history was concluded, "Madame de Valmont's wishes have been brought to pass, and she has been instrumental in reconciling you to your wife; without her aid, you would still have been sighing for a shadow, and neglecting the substance. May you take warning by the past, never to neglect the wife God has given you; nor to retire within yourself, as if you stood alone in the creation, and as if your wife was only such as the patriarchs of old seemed to have considered theirs,—companions merely for the continuation of the race of men. Do not imagine, however, that I consider Lady Delamore's conduct as faultless; but, this I must say, had she accepted

Mr. Graham's proposal—a proposal he ought not to have made,—had she fatally yielded to his wishes,—the chief blame, my Lord, would have been upon your head: nothing but your neglect would have made Graham lift his eyes to your wife,—nothing but your reserve and indifference would have made Lady Delamore, in thought, swerve from her duty. God be praised! she did not do so in act."

CHAPTER XIII.

Whilst Lord and Lady Delamore were ushered into the county of ——, by ringing of bells, firing of cannon, and every other manifestation of popular feeling; and whilst a whole neighbourhood flocked to Delamore Castle, as if a lord and a lady had never before been heard of there; Lucy Fitz-Edward returned to her former station, and former abode with Lady Mary Walters, resisting all the proffered charms of a tour in Scotland, with her cousin and Lord Delamore, after a short stay at Delamore Castle. She had been at Hampstead

about a week, when, one morning, her aunt and sister having driven out, Lady St. John's equipage appeared at the door. In a moment more, her Ladyship was in the room.

One of the greatest charms which Lady St. John's countenance possessed, was an animated open smile, which, though it sometimes had an air of malice, yet, upon the whole, was sufficiently prepossessing, and, on a first interview, betokened cordiality and good-humour. This smile was now fled, and Lucy, for the first time, beheld Lady St. John's face clouded by care or ill-temper. After the first salutations, some trifling remarks ensued, which however were soon abandoned by Lady St. John's beginning on the subject most prominent in her mind.

"So, I hear the Delamores are reconciled."

Miss Fitz-Edward assented, and expressed the satisfaction she felt.

"Do you suppose it will last?" inquired Lady St. John.

"Last!—My dear, what can you mean?"

"Why, that as they never agreed before, I do not see why they are to live better together now."

"As to disagreement," said Lucy warmly, "it is a great mistake to imagine that Caroline and Lord Delamore were in the habit of such domestic differences as often embitter and disgrace so many families."

"If they had been," replied Lady St. John, "they probably never would have parted: a good hearty dispute clears the air like a thunder storm. Believe me, the very worst state for married people, is one of restraint and mutual indifference. If Lord Delamore had been

always finding fault with his wife, he would have had no time to nourish his own selfish, gloomy temper; and had his lady been constantly disputing with his lordship, odious as she might have thought him, she would never have had time to discover that every body else in the world was not equally detestable."

"What a horrible picture you have drawn of a married state!—I cannot agree with you, however, that Caroline would have been better off, if such had been her case, or that her separation from Lord Delamore would have been less likely. Their reconciliation, however, decidedly would have been so."

"Pray, is it true," inquired Lady St. John, "that the story of Theresa Greville's death was all a fabrication, and that Lord Delamore fell in with her living as a common woman at B——?"

Lucy could hardly help smiling at

the way the world represented the story. "For Heaven's sake! Lady St. John, speak lower—Theresa Greville is the honourable wife of an honourable gentleman, Envoy from the Supreme Government of France, at the Court of B——."

"I dare say, they are a very honourable pair," said Lady St. John, laughing, and drawing her chair nearer to Lucy. "This same Theresa, you must know, I was a little acquainted with when she was in England. At her request, my brother introduced us to each other; and I of course talked to her of Lord Delamore,—a subject she seemed mighty indifferent about; and quickly abandoned to speak of my brother, in whose praise she was so eloquent, that I was convinced that, of the two friends, the one she was to marry was not him she liked. I also rather suspected that the lady de-

signed some of her soft speeches to be reported to Charles, with the kind intention of making the bitter pill of marriage as nauseous as possible, or perhaps to break off the affair entirely, not quite so unkind a project. It was no surprise to me, therefore, to hear of her marriage with M. d'Harcourt so soon after all was at an end between her and Lord Delamore; though, I own, I was rather startled at the story of her dying for love of him six months' afterwards.—But, my love, you must know all about it; so, pray, satisfy my longing curiosity."

Lucy did as she was requested, and related all that Caroline had imparted to her. Lady St. John was all attention; and when Lucy concluded, she burst out a-laughing.

"I am glad my story diverts you," said Lucy, with some surprise.

"Oh, it is charming!—Madame de Valmont is a woman of infinite taste."

"Infamous, rather say."

"What! infamous, to prefer Graham to Delamore?"

"I did not mean that," said Lucy, colouring deeply.

"But I did. Thank Heaven! he escaped her snares, however, as well as every other of my poor countrymen. Why, she would have set all London in an uproar with her intrigues, and her guileless looks, and her beauty. At seventeen, to have had one lover, to be about to marry another, and to have designs upon two more!"

"I forgive her all her misdemeanours," observed Lucy, "for having opened Lord Delamore's eyes."

"Those who hide can find; it was she who closed them.—But, tell me, what

do the reunited pair say of a certain Charles Graham?" — and Lady St. John's countenance assumed a graver cast:—"Of course, Lady Delamore is to have no farther intercourse with him; to leave the room, if he enters it; to pull down the blinds, if he is seen in the street; and draw up the window, if he passes the carriage."

"My dear Lady St. John, do you imagine the Delamores have lost their senses?"

"I know they are supposed just to have found them; but I also know that when a lady sacrifices her lover to her husband or her duty, it is tacitly agreed between the husband and wife, that the poor lover is to be mangled, maimed, and defaced in every possible way, leaving him no one good quality, mental or personal, to support him through the remainder of his life. His vile arts were

alone to blame; the wife was not in fault; the husband could not be; in short, by way of exemplification, he is compared to the serpent in the Garden of Eden, who deceived our first parents. — Now, tell me, is this not the way you have heard my poor brother talked of?"

Lucy rose impatiently. "I can very easily satisfy you as to that point: I never heard his name mentioned by either since their reconciliation."

"What! they despise him too much to speak of him.—Well, I see you are offended, which I am sorry for, as perhaps, now you will not take the trouble of answering a question which, in truth, is the great object of my visit — Do you think Lord Delamore will ever be reconciled to Charles?"

"I should be very sorry to think otherwise; but, indeed, I have no rea-

son to expect such an event, from any observation of my own; happily, they are too far asunder to make their being friends, or not, a matter of moment: when Mr. Graham returns from India——."

"Returns!—he *is* returned: he is at this moment in London."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Lucy; and, pale as death, she sunk into a chair.

"You need not be under any alarm at these tidings," said Lady St. John; "Charles is not come over in pursuit of either Lord or Lady Delamore, but on some political business, of far too great importance to be imparted to any ears but those of a Secretary of State; so, I cannot tell you what it is. He arrived at St. John four days back; yesterday, we all came to London; and to-day I am come to ascertain whether he and Lord Delamore are likely to

fight any more duels. I assure you, Charles will never again give him cause for jealousy: his passion has been fairly driven from his bosom by an Oriental sun, which acted upon it as upon a river, leaving nothing but stones and rock."

"I should rather suppose," said Lucy, trying to look indifferent, "some other passion——"

"No, no," interrupted Lady St. John; "Charles is at any body's service that is worthy of him; unless he is grown important and pompous, which, Heaven forbid! for then I should hate him. He will soon wish for a wife; and then I want you, Lucy, to be my sister-in-law."

"My dear Lady St. John, what strange ideas enter your head!"

"If you think them strange, I cannot help it; but I have something else yet

to say :—Will you, Lady Mary, and your sister, dine with us on Thursday? Now, do not hesitate and act the prude. Remember, Charles has gone through a three years' quarantine in the East. He is returned the most proper company for the most proper."

"I must ask my aunt: if she has no engagement, I dare say we shall be most happy."

"That is a good child.—Adieu! and if ever you hear Lord Delamore mention Charles's name, say a good word for him."

CHAPTER XIV.

On the following Thursday, Lady Mary Walters, with her two nieces, repaired to Lady St. John's house in town. Very different feelings occupied the three during their drive. Lady Mary had lived too long in the world to form any expectation, one way or the other, of an event so trivial as dining out, beyond perhaps the hope that the rooms would be neither too hot nor too cold. The youngest niece, on the other hand, knowing nothing of society, was full of the dignity at which she had

arrived in being included in a dinner engagement; and her little heart was perplexed, during the drive, with fears that her dress was too smart or too plain; and with ruminations as to whether the party would be large or small; and if Mr. Graham would be as good-humoured to her as he had been formerly; and a thousand other equally momentous considerations.

Lucy's feelings it would be difficult to describe: it seemed however to her, as she leant silently back in the carriage, that on that day depended every hope of happiness she possessed in the world.

A cloud hung on Lady St. John's brow when they arrived. Her brother was obliged to accept a late invitation to dine with the minister; and Lucy's neighbour at dinner informed her that Mr. Graham was reported as likely to come into office.

The party at Lord St. John's consisted of about ten persons, all sufficiently intimate and agreeable to render conversation not only animated but interesting. At any other time, Lucy could not have failed to have been pleased; but now her thoughts were alone fixed upon him who was absent. Totally unmindful of what was passing around her, she sat in melancholy musing, reflecting upon the possibility of Graham being now a very different person from what he had been three years back. He had left a party invited to meet him, was dining with the minister, and the reports of the world connected him with office in the State. It was probable, as Lady St. John hinted, that his love had been cured; but ambition, quite as strong a passion, has taken its place. "But," thought Lucy, "why should I think of him? What was Graham to me? What

can he ever be?" Lucy dared not pursue the mental inquiry; for the truth, the undisguised truth, was, that Graham was every thing to her.

From the first moment of her acquaintance, she considered him the most pleasing man she had ever known; and even the pain he caused her by his attentions to Caroline, served but to make his idea more prevalent in her mind. Accustomed to think of him, to fear, and sometimes to blame him, it was not until they parted, perhaps for ever, that she still found Graham in her thoughts; and that when his name was heard by Caroline with indifference, and his remembrance had to a degree faded from every other mind, he continued an object of interest and compassion to Lucy, and, as such, to be hardly ever absent from her thoughts, as she turned to that far-spreading East where her hope in this

world alone rested. It was in vain to deceive herself that such feelings could have no reference to what had taken place between Mr. Graham and Caroline: one thing alone was in her power—not to conquer, but to conceal her love. As long as he was away, this was an easy task; but now, when she must hear of him, meet him, and talk of him, she trembled for fear her weakness should be betrayed.

Spite of the charms which a ministerial dinner must be concluded to possess, Mr. Graham returned home early enough to have a little of Lady Mary's and her niece's society before they took leave.

"I am very well pleased to see Mr. Graham looking so well," observed Lady Mary Walters, when seated in the carriage to return home: "he is very little altered either in manner or appearance.

His foolish attachment to Lady Delamore is, I trust, eradicated, and he will probably marry under happier auspices than formerly."

Lucy being silent, Lady Mary continued to speculate upon whom he might fix. After naming and rejecting several: "What should you say, Lucy, to his cousin, Lady Maria Dawson?"

Lucy, obliged to reply, answered with some hesitation, that she believed her to be a very amiable woman; but that most people imagined she would marry Sir William Beaufort.

"Not if Mr. Graham proposes for her. If a peer was to step in, the case might be different; for I have always imagined Lady Maria not devoid of ambition, or she would not have been so long unmarried, for she is very handsome."

"Very handsome indeed!" said Lucy

with a sigh; and she thought how many opportunities Mr. Graham would probably have of meeting his cousin.

"Yes, yes," continued Lady Mary; "it is a very likely match. Lady Alton will be charmed, for she is very fond of her nephew: it will be, I make no doubt."

In a few weeks Lady Mary had reason to change her opinion, and to anticipate a far more interesting union than that with Lady Maria Dawson.

Mr. Graham's visits to Hampstead were not unfrequent, and each time confirmed more strongly, that, if he proposed to any one, Lucy would be the person; but he had not been happy in marriage, and he seemed to dread again to take so decided a step; he hesitated, paused, sometimes drew back, but still his attentions increased, spite of every occasional retrograde movement. Lady Mary wise-

ly judged that such an affair was best left to itself; though she was now more than ever desirous for its accomplishment, that she beheld the roses of health and happiness again returning to Lucy's cheeks, again saw her animated step, again heard her cheerful voice.—The mystery of her former dejection was now explained; but days, weeks, flew away—the wished-for question was not asked.

CHAPTER XV.

"EVERY thing in India," observed Mr. Graham, one day, to Lucy, "was foreign to my habits, tastes, and ideas."

"But, nevertheless," she answered, "you continued your residence so long there, that the generality of the world might be induced to surmise that the pomp of the East had its attractions."

"I remained there, because I thought I ought so to do. It was a voluntarily inflicted banishment; if a most happy event had not taken place within the

last few weeks, I should still have considered it my duty to return to my place of exile, when I had concluded the affairs which brought me to England. As it is, how different is my lot!—to live with those I like; to talk the language of independence; no longer to be the gaze of multitudes, the slave of slaves; to be cringed to, and solicited; and ever offending, as well as pleasing:—still such a state was felicity compared with that of my mind during my voyage. I had no occupation but to think; and my reflections were as severe a punishment as my bitterest enemy could have required; not as regarded myself, but her, who, in truth, I must confess, *then* clung to my heart, far dearer than life itself. The thought of her situation was agony. My sister's first letter, after I arrived in India, removed, however, a weight from my heart. She described Lady Delamore

as having the opinion of the wise and the good in her favour; but still it was not enough to know she was respected: I wished to hear of her being again the pride and ornament of society, and to be satisfied that the whole world, even the meanest individual, considered her as pure as I knew her to be; and that her reputation was as free from tarnish, even in the most prudish eyes, as at the moment Delamore made her his wife. Thank God! such is now the case. Having said so much, however, I must beg Miss Fitz-Edward not to imagine that those feelings, which once so justly excited her reprehension, still exist: some interest I ever must feel for your cousin; but all warmer sentiments, you must do me the credit to believe, have long ceased."

"And do you really think you could see her without emotion?"

"Yes; though not with the indifference of a stranger."

"Are you quite sure?"

"Perfectly so; my three years' banishment would have been to little purpose otherwise. I shall be quite hurt, if you do not credit me."

"I do," said Lucy earnestly,—"I do believe you; and very much admire the conquest you have made over a passion supposed to be usually irresistible."

"You cannot speak from your own feelings, Miss Fitz-Edward, of love as a passion not to be subdued; you must have met some one whom you would have preferred to others:—insensibility cannot be the cause that you are as I left you."

Lucy blushed. "The private thoughts of a maiden are inscrutable: in a Catholic country, they may perhaps yield

utterance to a priest; here, they are untold."

"I will not urge you," said Graham, laughing, "as if I were a father-confessor: time, which discloses all things, may perhaps unfold your private feelings."

Time did discover them; and, in a few months afterwards, Graham had the happiness of hearing from Lucy's own lips, who had had the power to gain her heart. Immediately afterwards, he became her declared lover, Lucy the happiest of women, Lady St. John, and Lady Mary Walters hardly less delighted, and the participation only of two persons required to render their joy complete: those two were Lord and Lady Delamore.

In several of Lucy's letters to her cousin, she had mentioned Mr. Graham's name, in hopes that the answer might

contain something to promote a greater confidence. She was, however, disappointed; Lady Delamore studiously avoiding any remark upon what Lucy said relating to Mr. Graham. Such pointed silence a little offended Lucy, who, as in duty bound, was very anxious that her lover should be treated with all due consideration. Profiting, therefore, by the opportunity of Caroline's again becoming a mother, which afforded an excuse for not writing, her approaching marriage was known to the whole world, excepting to her who, next to Mr. Graham, Lucy preferred to the whole world. Common report brought the news first to Lady Delamore, who, in her turn, was a little surprised at her cousin's neglect in not apprising her of such an event; and expressed herself accordingly in the letter she instantly address-

ed her. Miss Fitz-Edward replied as follows :—

"You must forgive me, my dearest Caroline, for not having announced my happy prospects to you: often have I taken up the pen with that intention, and as often have I thrown it aside, not knowing how to inform you of an event which I tremble to think may not meet your and Lord Delamore's approbation. At present my ignorance is bliss: I am uncertain of your opinion; it may be favourable to my wishes :—most earnestly do I pray such may be the case; for, much as I am attached to Mr. Graham, I hardly know how my engagement to him is ever to be accomplished, if the price is to be the sacrifice of my friendship to you; if it is to close your doors to us; to render us strangers: and yet,

after all that is past, I dread to hear that such must be the case.

"But, my dear Caroline, three years are gone since the period which was so nearly fatal to the happiness of us all. Graham is no longer the Graham you knew: his passions are calmed; he has ceased to be the daily victim of his father's extravagance; and daily to suffer the misery of an ill-assorted marriage, which all the wealth, so dearly purchased, rendered the more unbearable. He is now a man truly sensible of the fault of nourishing a dishonourable attachment, and of the terrible result,—the raising his hand against the life of his friend—he is a man happy in his own family, and, I trust, about to increase his happiness. Such is Graham: in other respects he is the very same as he to whom you once said you wished I could be united. A circumstance, then

so improbable, is now about to take place :—pray, therefore, my dear cousin, think well, ere you refuse your sanction to a marriage once considered so desirable. Blot from your mind all cruel recollections, and in the husband of your Lucy forget the faults of the husband of Lady Juliana."

THE MARRIED MAN.

You look not well, Signor Antonio:
You have too much respect upon the world:
They lose it that do buy it with much care.

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

THE MARRIED MAN.

To those who have been absent from home many years, the return to the abode of their early days is matter of so much mixture of feeling, that neither pleasure nor pain may be said usually to predominate. If, as in the case of him who is now about to present himself to the reader, the absence has been more than ten years, in another quarter of the globe; unfeigned delight at the sight of the paternal halls, might argue that many bitter moments had inter-

vened since last he greeted them. On the other hand, if those years have not been years of sorrow, but only according to the chequered common career of mortal life—then, the home view may appear tame, melancholy, uninteresting; and a doubt of the happiness therein to be enjoyed may cross the mind of even a wearied traveller in the busy scenes of life.

With such blended feelings, I heard the heavy gates of my brother's park (which I had left my father's) close upon me; in another few minutes, those of the court-yard opened, and in the next moment I was fast locked in the arms of a brother. That minute was one of perfect felicity, unblended with retrospection or anticipation, either pleasing or painful. Ten years and more in a foreign land had not been unblessed by many ties of friendship; but none could

equal the bond which unites brothers in kindred love,—that love which grew with their growth, and strengthened with their strength, and which, in my case and my brother's, engrossed all the affections of our parents; for we had no sisters or brothers to share that which consequently was for ourselves alone.

"My dearest Arthur!"—"My dearest John!" were all the words that for some time were heard to issue from our lips.

"But Flora, where is Flora?" said my brother, after a pause; "I must seek Flora—she has only walked into the pleasure-ground. She never would have gone farther the day you were expected. I will seek her; but first come in here. This was the billiard-room, which you may remember; well, it is now the breakfast-room, and we have had the

billiard ta . . . . But this will all do another time,—I must run and fetch Flora."

My departure from England was strongly connected with the recollection of this same Flora. The day before I sailed, I had taken my chance, and, flying up to London, had witnessed the ceremony of my brother's nuptials; and was just in time back again at Portsmouth, with a fast-sailing boat, to catch the Indiaman in which I had secured my passage.—This Flora was to my mind's eye as visible as though we had parted yesterday. I saw her blushing cheek, concealed beneath her Brussels veil; her long, fair curling hair; her slender figure bending beneath folds of lace, drapery, and jewels; and withal so truly bridelike, feminine, lovely, and modest;—she was all, in short, that a boy's first dream of love presents to

him, and which so seldom proves other than a dream. In all my thoughts of home, this lovely creature shedding light and life around my brother's fireside, was ever present to my view.

My brother's footstep was again heard. I turned my eyes from the contemplation of a picture of my father, hanging over the chimney-piece, to the door. My brother indeed entered, and with him a lady. The lady was short and plump; a coarse and not precisely new Dunstable straw bonnet, undecked by ribbons, was drawn low on her face. A dark common shawl, thick shoes which bore manifest token that the rain which had fallen that morning had moistened the soil, completed the costume of my brother's companion. It could not be Flora; so I resumed the contemplation of my father's picture. In a moment, however, the lady had sprung forward

and seized my hand, and my brother's voice was heard.

"What! Arthur, have you forgotten Flora?"

The colour flew to my cheek: with a thousand apologies, I made every show of delight; concealed my surprise, saluted my fair sister-in-law, and found in her smiling answer, that her pearl-like teeth and cheerful countenance no time could alter.

The reception she gave me was kindness itself: she soon hurried me to my room, to show me all the comforts she had arranged to suit the East Indian's tender habits. For the luxury of a blazing fire, though in the dog-days, I felt ready to worship her. I was in the frozen state of a chilly mortal in the days appointed to form a distinction in the seasons, by open windows, empty grates, and light dresses!

As I was making my toilette for dinner, Flora was the occupation of my thoughts;—and I had worked up my mind into the belief, (perhaps gratitude for the fire had something to do with my charity,) that she was not altered; that her dress alone was to blame, and that in her evening costume I should quickly recognise the Flora of other days. I was doomed to disappointment. Mrs. Courtenay, in full dress, I am shocked to say, looked more the housekeeper than ever; and I sighed to acknowledge, that her coarse attire was more in unison with her actual appearance than that of the mistress of the mansion, in which character she took her place at the head of the table.

My brother was a great advocate for air, and the current which a door and open window produced, displeasing as it was to my enervated constitution, was

still more fatal to Mrs. Courtenay's hair and complexion. The scanty locks were soon uncurled, and the roseate tint which should have rested on the cheeks, fled to the nose. Then, a very ill-made gown was not improved by a small shawl thrown over the shoulders, which hung without grace, and, I presumed, without actual utility, as I judged from the frequent twitches it received from Mrs. Courtenay's rounded arm, (the best part about her,) when the temple of the winds in which we regaled, inclined the said shawl to fall from the round back on which it was designed to rest. But though to outward appearance changed, yet in other respects she was still the same Flora she had ever been; tender, amiable, gentle, contented, and cheerful.

We removed into the drawing-room, and whilst his lady worked, my brother and myself talked. The evening soon

vanished, and I retired into the solitude of my own apartment, impressed with nothing so much as the change in Flora, and my brother's insensibility to it. It was strange, passing strange! and I determined, ere I slept, to arrange the matter as satisfactorily as I could in my own mind, that it should give me no farther trouble: in the same manner as when a boring enigma has been brought forward for the entertainment of the company, no rest can be obtained without solving that which, when elucidated, is soon forgotten. The result of my meditations was as follows:—

Flora, though pretty, had not beauty enough to counteract neglect of personal appearance, either as to dress, carriage, figure, or complexion. Her bloom had vanished, and her shape was impaired by the birth of two children. The being whom perhaps with envy I

deemed my brother's bride was no more; but the mind remained, and that mind was every thing.

My brother's blindness was less easy to explain; for he himself was exactly the man I had left him, in every respect. Some lines of Moore happily came across my mind, and supplied me with ideas; and I sunk to sleep, murmuring these beautiful words:—

"Oh the heart that has truly loved, never forgets,
And as truly loves unto the close,
As the sun-flower turns on her god when he sets,
The same look which he turn'd when he rose."

More than any other change was the change in my ideas, of which fact a very short residence at home convinced me. I had acquired new tastes; the tastes of those I had been separated from, remained stationary. My brother farmed, hunted, visited his neighbours, received

them, attended Magistrate meetings; was active, respectable, popular, as he had ever been. He visited London, or rather Boodle's, for a few weeks every spring; for in that precious club, most precious to the tribe of Squires, whether titled or untitled, was his idea of London concentrated. He was always cheerful and occupied; though why he was so happy, seemed strange to my more fastidious mind: and his occupations, though constant, produced so slight a result, that the employment to me seemed more unsatisfactory than positive idleness.

Such feelings, however, I took good care to keep to myself. The warmth of his reception demanded my gratitude; and the offer of his house as my home, was far from a matter of indifference to a man who had lived twelve years in the luxury of the East, and was returned, thanks to his own improvidence, just as

poor as he went out; for, though during those twelve years, my income had been splendid, I had now nought to show, but a few shawls and some jewels, the former of which I presented to "Flora." She was all thanks, and put them in a drawer, awaiting a fitting opportunity to wear them, where they died a lingering death by the mouths of the moths. With regard to the jewels, as I could not sacrifice them to Mrs. Courtenay's no taste, they remained in my possession, to remind me of hopes destroyed, pleasures past, youth wasted, and wealth squandered,—in short, a life misspent.

Mrs. Courtenay (I must drop the name of Flora) and myself were the best friends possible. She was the most good-natured creature in the world, and delighted to have any one towards whom she could exercise her kindly feelings. Her children were boys, and

at school, so that that source for her active benevolence was to a degree closed. When, however, it did open itself, in the period of holidays, her torn garments, broken china, and littered apartments, proclaimed that she and her hopeful sons contrived to redeem the time, and in a very short period to indemnify themselves fully for the privation they were at times obliged to suffer of that, which seemed equally delightful to all parties,—the charm of spoiling and being spoilt.

This exuberance of good-nature, therefore, fell in some portion to my share, in the absence of her children. I was very thankful: all, therefore, was peace at Courtenay Hall.

The Courtenays lived much with their neighbours; they gave constant dinner-parties, and, alas! as constantly returned such visits. Though I sometimes did

give a shrug as the card of invitation met my eye, yet I had no alternative but to accept; so much easier is it to say "yes," than "no." Into every drawing-room, therefore, within ten miles around Courtenay Hall, did I follow my sister's round and my brother's athletic form. A new face is always acceptable in the monotony of a country life. "The Colonel" (meaning myself) had therefore no fault to find with his reception. He was an old friend to some, though new to others;—nearly equal claims to being well received. Still, the pleasure I derived was somewhat dubious. The conversation was so completely local, that, for a long time, I was in the dark as to every thing uttered; but when the light opened upon my mind, as to the wit or wisdom I heard, I know not that I was in the least better satisfied or amused.

The good-nature of my associates made me, however, conceal my disgust; they were really fond of me. I had left a good name behind me, which, thanks to the insipid existence of country squires, had not been obliterated by the lapse of years; and I accordingly took up my character as I found it, and as I left it. The importance I was of, often amused me; and I found myself positively referred to as an umpire in one or two cases which had been in dispute during the whole of my absence.

One case, which though at the time it occurred was no matter of indifference, an old gentleman was twenty-four hours bringing to my mind, interlarding his discourse with exclamations of surprise and pity for my loss of memory.—Memory indeed! a pretty use to make of it, if only to be applied to the pedigree of a horse!

But touching the matter in dispute: I had once taken French leave with a precious hunter of my father's, and rode her a-hunting: the result being somewhat disastrous, as is sometimes the case with stolen pleasures, the poor creature was lamed for life. She was however not doomed to obscurity or idleness in consequence; and, in becoming the mother of a numerous offspring, performed her duty to the full as serviceably as had she continued the more honourable career of following the hounds. Her numerous progeny were in great repute in the neighbourhood, but their exact descent had ever been a matter of dispute to two learned, obstinate, and idle neighbouring squires. A bet of ten pounds was the result, and I the umpire appointed. I, of all people in the world, who had almost forgotten I had ever been a fox-hunting in my life, and

thought nothing inferior to a tiger worthy of the pursuit of man. I, who had, in the chequered scene of life, seen too much of man's authority, whether justly or unjustly aroused, to remember the transient cloud which overhung my father's brow when my really ill-behaviour was disclosed to him in the boyish trick I have related.

The end of the business was, that I did recall to mind the particulars of the poor mare's pedigree. The consequence was, that the winner of the bet became my fast friend; the loser, my almost declared enemy: the last result, as being more piquante, was far more agreeable.

Whilst I was perpetually reminded of things which I had forgotten, or wished to forget, and was ever hearing of what excited no interest, two persons whom I really did remember, and ever had remembered, seemed to have as

much fallen into oblivion with all those around, as most of the events which their minds retained had with me.

Seymour and Osborne were both exactly my own age; we had been at the same school, and, from the contiguous nature of our parents' property, had spent our holidays together. We were therefore companions necessarily, which in time cemented as strong a friendship as boys ever feel: we were all three manly, well-grown, active, well-bred—such were the points of resemblance; but there were strong shades of difference in our actual characters. Seymour was the wildest boy that ever tormented teachers and relations; Osborne, precisely the contrary: the most tractable and least troublesome. He never did get into mischief, or if he did, he was sure either to escape detection or get out of the scrape hand-

somely. Seymour, on the contrary, was sure to make bad worse, by his own imprudence; and was always the victim of his own mad pranks, or the pranks of others; for he was ever looked upon as criminal, and had to bear, deservedly or undeservedly, whatever those in power chose to burthen his shoulders with.

The nicknames of these boys at school will perhaps best designate their character—*Solomon* and *Satan.* I was exactly formed to be the bond which linked together two such opposite characters. I had what is termed uneven spirits; leaning to the sad, perhaps, more than the gay; and though I certainly loved and admired Seymour the best of the two, yet in the society of Osborne I often felt more tranquil and contented, though less decidedly delighted than in that of Seymour: with the one,

I could rest; with the other, I became weary from excess of amusement.

Such were my two early friends, whom I in vain sought amidst the crowd of faces I every day renewed acquaintance with. Their names seemed to have vanished as well as their persons. Seymour's father, I knew, was dead; for, during a short period after I quitted England, I had kept up an effort at a correspondence, and the event had accordingly reached me through that channel; but the place which should have been his in consequence, I ascertained, owned another master; it had been sold. I sighed, but was not surprised. To what did all those wild freaks, reckless spirits, extravagance, and folly, tend? To what I imagined had been the result —ruin and oblivion: his wealth, name, and, by all but me, his person forgotten! But, however pitied I might be for

shortness of memory in other respects, he was never likely to be obliterated from my mind. His agile form I could ever bring to my recollection; and there were places which I visited now again, after the lapse of years, which seemed still to echo to his jocund laugh,—still to be enlivened by his radiant smile. It was all vain! no Seymour's welcome gave pleasure to my heart; his faults, follies, and virtues, were apparently closed—perhaps in the grave—I dared not ask!

But of *Solomon*, the case was different; and that he should not be spoken of was surprising. "Such a sensible boy," "such a handsome boy," as he had begun life by being termed;—such a steady, shrewd, rich, wise man as I had left him; he must decidedly be dead, and I with some hesitation ventured to inquire who lived at Hazelborough Hall.

"Mr. Osborne," was the answer.

"What Osborne?"

"Why, Robert Osborne, to be sure."

"My old schoolfellow?"

"Certainly."

"I am surprised we have not met."

"He does not visit much," was my brother's short and conclusive answer to my inquiries; which conveyed to me the idea that the name of *Solomon* was far more deservedly bestowed than I had ever in former times imagined; and I determined to renew my acquaintance immediately.

The first leisure day, I mounted the horse which was at my disposal, and by some old and well-known paths, found myself in front of Hazelborough Hall. It was a beautiful place. For a short time I paused to gaze around me. I rung the bell; the lovely scene was connected with the remembrance of many happy hours of childish, thought-

less glee. Osborne was an only child of rich and indulgent parents, and with him holidays were indeed jovial days; and through him such days were partaken of by others, amongst whom was myself. His parents created, and we enjoyed:—dancing, cricket, fire-works, racing, and all the concomitant charms of eating and drinking, summed up a reign of enchantment for the lively, and pleasure for the less mercurial, such as myself and Osborne. To Seymour, indeed, the delight was more decided; and again did the scene before me bring him to my mind in all his bloom, and youth, and life.

Turning with a sigh from the prospect around, I ascended leisurely the flight of marble steps, and, ringing at the bell, was soon surrounded by a troop of domestics in simple but handsome liveries, by whom and through whom I was

ushered into a library, a room in former days but little frequented by myself, but which still, I plainly perceived, had undergone as much alteration as my ideas concerning the value of its contents. It was a charming apartment: books, elegantly bound, enclosed in gothic bookcases of carved wood-work; painted glass windows; a dark and rich carpet; massive inkstands, globes, and various chairs and tables of antique pattern, constituted this apartment dedicated entirely to study, but into which one solitary extra ornament had crept, a masterpiece of Reubens, which was suspended over the chimney-piece.

The room was entirely to my taste, and I gazed with delight. I had some time to indulge my contemplations, for I think twenty minutes elapsed before Osborne made his appearance. He was very little altered, and I not so much so

as to make recognition at all difficult; mutual expressions of pleasure passed our lips.

"I am afraid," I observed at length, "that I have brought you home; is it so?"

"Oh no,—I had not been out; indeed I was at breakfast, and—and imagined it was your brother; otherwise I would have had you introduced into the breakfast-room."

This answer, as to the distinction between me and my brother, I did not perfectly comprehend; however, I made no farther remark than that his hours and my brother's were very different.

"My hours are late," said Osborne: "I know not how it is: I am always determining to turn over a new leaf, but matters rather grow worse than better, I think."

"You are not a sportsman, then, I

guess; it is that which keeps men in such habits of early hours and alertness.—In former days, I remember you cared very little for either shooting or hunting; and the fitting up of this apartment shows you know how to employ your time to better purpose at home."

"I can employ my time at home, most certainly; but whether to better purpose, I am sure I cannot decide: accident very often, more than natural disposition, bends the taste to that which in time becomes habit; and habit, as we have all been told in our nurseries, is second nature."

I smiled. "But your habit or nature was ever accounted serious;—I have not forgotten your nickname, *Solomon the Wise.*"

A very faint echo of a laugh burst from Osborne's lips:—he did not seem to like the recollections, however, if I

might judge from a tinge of red which spread itself over his face. I therefore turned the subject to the books which environed us; the cloud vanished immediately from the brow of Osborne, and we were soon deeply engaged with the mental treasures around. The name of one author produced another; from those of former days we got to our own Augustan age; the field was a large one, and in diving into our accumulated reading of years, the time flew rapidly away, and at the end of two hours, we parted: I far more satisfied with my renewed acquaintance, than with all the rest *en masse*; and he profuse in his thanks for my visit, and earnest entreaties that I would renew it speedily.

Osborne did not return my visit; I was surprised; and one day, sitting with my sister-in-law, expressed as much.

"He seldom does come *here*," she re-

plied, with much emphasis on the last syllable. "About four years ago, he dined with us to meet Lord Farnham; I do not believe we have met since; it was with some difficulty he was prevailed upon to come at all."

"So, Osborne is a bit of a misanthrope," I observed.

"A what?" inquired my simple-minded sister.

"An enemy to society,—a lover of solitude," I explained.

"Very possibly," answered Mrs. Courtenay gravely; "and, to be sure, it is to be hoped he is, for he leads as dull a life as any one ever did, though not precisely solitary."

I had a mind to continue the discourse, but my sister prevented my intentions by sitting down to the pianoforte, on which she rattled away some old country-dance of her youth, spite of

a wretched instrument, wretchedly out of tune: the effect was decisive; I fled to my own apartment.

It was not in my nature to be punctilious, nor, to own the truth, my interest, as far as Osborne was concerned. His library was an attraction in visiting him, which rendered the balance very much in my favour in continuing the acquaintance. As soon, therefore, as I well could do so, I renewed my visit, was most cordially received; again discussed authors and their works; and diversified the visit by a ride in his capacious park, where at every step were proofs of Osborne's taste and power to indulge it. I was charmed; and, at my friend's request, returned in a few days, for the sole purpose of accompanying him in a more extended ride about his place.

It was in this ride that the conversation fell upon my brother. I eulogised

with deserving praise his domestic happiness.

"To be sure," I continued, "how little personal charms have to do with married bliss; the mind is alone what should be considered."

"I never understood Mrs. Courtenay's forte was mind," observed my companion drily.

"You are quite right; but one should form one's judgment according to the degree required, not as to what it might be possible to possess. Like riches, what is wealth to one, is hardly bread to another; so my sister's mental treasures are quite sufficient for the satisfaction of him they are lavished on: more mind would be superfluous; less, my brother even, could hardly do without in his companion. What I term mind however in Mrs. Courtenay would be better designated as disposition:—she is the

most good-tempered, contented being that ever walked the earth."

"Your brother is very fortunate in being so well suited in his partner; she seems to have been formed for him," said Osborne, still more drily than before. I was rather piqued by his manner, and added with increased energy—

"As to that, Mrs. Courtenay, I am sure, would make any one happy; she is so determined to accommodate herself to the taste and way of life of her partner. She was brought up entirely in the world; but no human being would now suspect she had ever had a pleasure beyond her home and garden. She was very much admired, and, it was thought, was not insensible to it. But, from the moment she married, she seemed to forget that any other man existed but her husband. She has formed her character by his: if she

had married a different person, she would decidedly have done the same, whether with equal success it is impossible to decide."

Osborne made not the slightest answer, so the conversation fell to the ground.

On our return towards the house, as I was taking leave, a servant approached and informed Osborne the luncheon was ready. I was really famished, and the sound was most grateful to my ears; and I awaited with impatience the natural result,—an invitation to partake thereof. It struck me, or it was my hunger made me observant, that Osborne was somewhat tardy in requesting me to walk in. "What the devil," I thought; "is he a miser, and alarmed at my drinking a glass of wine, and eating a mutton-chop in his house?" And at that moment my not being allowed to enter the breakfast-room, the morning of my first visit,

came across my mind. I was, however, too hungry to be scrupulous ; so, putting my dignity into my pocket, I sprung from my horse and hurried into the house after Osborne, who seemed particularly alert, as if wishing to anticipate my approach. That, however, I did not allow him to do, and entered his dining-room with himself, where, at a table on which lay an elegant repast, sat an equally elegant female !

The supposed little French milliner in Joseph Surface's room instantly came into my mind; but I restrained my smiles, brought forward my best manners, and drove away from my thoughts the *mal-à-propos* conversation I had just held with my friend and the lady's protector.

An introduction speedily took place, and I seated myself at the table, of which the lady did the honours with infinite

ease, and some grace. She was, though *un peu passée*, very handsome. Her dark eyes received an additional lustre from a slight tinge of rouge, and her very well-assorted ribbons, mingled with her black locks, and the blonde lace of her cap, set off her complexion and features to the very best advantage. Her figure was perhaps too fat, but good; and her gown of the most costly description and perfect make; her fingers and throat were not neglected, and had their share of ornament as far as was compatible with a morning attire.

The contrast between Angelica (for such was her name) and my brother's wife, struck me so forcibly, that I could hardly prevent a very decided fit of laughter from bursting forth: however, I restrained my mirth, and conversed with the lady; and when the smile could not be commanded, it was ascribed to

her wit. We talked of the weather, of the fruit, of the flowers: no shyness of course was on the lady's part; but I could not help thinking her manner to me had a peculiarity about it, as if we had met before; there was a half cunning expression in the corner of her eyes, added to some faint idea that her features were familiar, which convinced me such was the case. But I had no idea of profiting from such a position, to prolong the visit a moment beyond the time which civility and my appetite required: having satisfied the calls of both, I took leave.

Osborne followed me out of the room: he looked annoyed; and I thought of his nickname *Solomon!* but we parted with much cordiality.

"Now you have broken the ice," said Osborne, "and have eaten in my house, perhaps you will indulge me with your company to dinner some day. Whenever

it suits you, Mrs. Osborne and myself will always be delighted to see you."

The reason which confined Osborne so much to his home being thus, as I thought, explained, I had no scruple in accepting the invitations to dinner, which rapidly succeeded my introduction to Mrs. Osborne! We were generally a trio; but sometimes he had an acquaintance staying in the house, or a neighbour joined the party, and I occasionally slept at Hazelborough Hall. This mode of life did not quite suit my fair sister-in-law; and the manner in which she pronounced, "Of course, Colonel Courtenay, we need not ask where you dined yesterday," or the more piquante remark, "You are really very kind, to give us the pleasure of your company to-day, when we all know how much *gayer* you might be elsewhere," savoured more of ill-nature than I imagined could possi-

bly have been produced by the acid of my sister's disposition.

My brother happily, however, came to my assistance: "Variety is always a good thing," said he; "and I am particularly glad you do see so much of Osborne. He is a good fellow, and employs more labourers than any other gentleman in the county. To be sure, he is horridly slack about poachers; but, however, we will forgive him that fault, which is somewhat neutralized by his neighbour Dawkins's severity. He must be very much obliged to you for your visits, for he leads a dull life; but, however, as people sow, so must they reap. When Arthur gets a wife, Flora, then you shall blame his acquaintance; but till then, leave him in peace, dearest. It is a piece of good luck for Osborne to have a friend yet free to choose his society. It would not be seemly for family men to be fre-

quenting his house; so the poor man, in this neighbourhood, where all have wives or daughters, is sadly at a loss for company."

"To my Eastern notions," I replied, "the seclusion to which Osborne is doomed seems somewhat strange; however, it is much to the credit of the proper feeling of the neighbourhood that it should be so."

"As to that," observed my brother, "I do not believe we are better or worse than the rest of the world. There are those near at hand, who would have no scruples about who sat at the head of a table which owned Osborne for master; but Osborne himself is fastidious; and, being neglected by the few he had ever sought, he in his turn took the disdainful line, and would not associate with the more lenient. He always was what is called 'high' and not easy of

access; his seclusion, therefore, is of a much more decided cast, than ninety-nine cases out of a hundred would be under similar circumstances."

To do poor Flora justice, my brother's speech was most effective; and from that moment no farther allusion was made to my acquaintance at Hazelborough: all was therefore peace at Courtenay, as if no Osborne or Angelica existed.

With my daily increasing intimacy, so did my pleasure in Osborne's society improve. Years had softened the harsher shades in his character: in early life he was somewhat self-sufficient; and though often indulgent, yet he could be overbearing; he was a spoilt child, and a wise child, and a rich child, and a handsome child. Equally with his childhood, the days of indulgence, and apparently those of wisdom, had fled;

his wealth indeed remained, but the beauty of youth was gone. Still Osborne was to my eyes an improved character. There was a triumphant prosperity about him when we parted, that was rather too much displayed, to be agreeable to the less favoured sons of fortune, or to give much opinion of the sense or feeling of the possessor. All that was now entirely changed: Osborne talked of himself as of a being more insignificant than any other in the creation, and whose place in the world was too minute for discovery. He had never been deficient in talent, and his mind was highly cultivated; at times he was, when last we lived together, a pleasant companion; but now, he never was otherwise, at least to my taste. What was peculiarly satisfactory to me, was what he was not, as much as what he was. My long experience abroad, and

my shorter insight into home concerns, had made me appreciate well the merits of one who talked not gossip, of sporting, of his servants, or of himself.

But with my affection came my pity. Why was he connected with Angelica? What thraldom united him to her? Why for her were his talents in obscurity, his friends deserted, his house a solitude?

I soon discovered that Angelica was a former acquaintance of mine: it would have been well, perhaps, had I been her only acquaintance. Our connexion had been quickly formed, and as expeditiously dissolved: she quitted me for a rich Baronet, and I her for India, where no thought of Angelica ever again intruded on my mind. Now, however, and I must do her the justice, it was Angelica herself who confessed the fact: the remembrance of our brief acquaint-

ance was renewed: the first moment we were alone, the truth was acknowledged, and, at the same time, I made a solemn promise never to reveal to Osborne that we had been friends of old. I know not what I might have done without Angelica's request. I certainly, for Osborne's sake, was no friend to her; but a discovery I very shortly made as effectually tied my tongue as the extorted promise.

Osborne and myself were sitting one day after dinner; Angelica had retired; the conversation turned on marriage. After a few general and commonplace observations on both sides, I concluded, or was about to conclude, with a hint or two on Osborne's future prospects, which I thought suited the opportunity. The words "When you marry . . ." had only escaped from my lips, when a violent start on the part of my compa-

nion effectually froze the remainder of the sentence.

"Marry!" exclaimed Osborne at length.—"What is your meaning, Arthur?"

"I—I—do not exactly know; but some day . . ." I paused, not knowing well what to say, for the truth now for the first time flashed across my mind. Osborne rose and walked to the chimney-piece. After contemplating the empty grate a short time, he turned to me.

"Did not you know, Arthur, that *I was married?*"

"I beg you, or rather Mrs. Osborne, a thousand pardons; but, I am obliged to confess, I was not aware that such was the case. I had imagined your connexion was of a different kind—her being called by your name should have undeceived me; but it is so common a compliment to pay those who have no legal right

to it, that it shed no light upon my mind."

Osborne regarded me fixedly. "My information has been, I fear, more unpleasant than pleasing."

I returned no answer: indeed, I was far too much annoyed to speak. "You would rather I had been still free to choose," he added.

"If you had rather *not*, I have nothing to say on the question."

A sigh, or rather a groan, was the only answer I received from Osborne. A silence ensued; at length I spoke:

"I hope, Osborne, the mistake I have laboured under has not been wounding to your feelings: I grieve to have distressed you; but, I must be candid, I grieve far more for the cause. As long as I imagined you unmarried, your present mode of life might end to-morrow; and, I am sorry to confess, the morality

of your connexion does not make up in my mind for its——"

"Folly! you would say," interrupted Osborne.

"'Durability' was the word I thought of; but have it as you will."

"My will, then, is decidedly for the word 'folly;' but it is a folly which six years I have already suffered for, and which, in the natural course of things, I shall suffer for all my days. But death heals all wounds; with life, all sorrow ceases."

"I do not like such a source of consolation as the only one," I replied: "death should not be regarded with dread; but life, equally, should not be abandoned with disgust."

"Such *should* be the case, but such is not always the case," Osborne answered.

The discovery I had made soon led to the most perfect confidence on the

part of Osborne; not that any one was in ignorance of his marriage; it was my long absence from England which had concealed the fact from me alone. Mrs. Osborne's position as to society was the same almost as it had ever been; so no light fell from that quarter on my mind; the greatest change in that respect was in her husband. Osborne's confidence was less as to his actual marriage, than to collateral circumstances which mainly contributed to it. A sketch of those circumstances, as they fell from his mouth, is the result of various discourses I held with him, who in early life was deemed worthy of the name of *Solomon!* which circumstances I am about to relate in nearly the very words they were uttered by Osborne, in those many leisure hours, which his fate granted to him, and which my taste profited by. It is in his own person I shall speak.

OSBORNE'S STORY.

As a text before a sermon, so I shall begin my tale by a letter of my mother's, which may fairly be considered as the thread which, when spun out, bound me by those mental fetters ycleped *wisdom*, which to me have proved far more injurious than the cap and bells of the veriest fool on earth.

TO CHARLES OSBORNE, ESQ.

"MY DEAREST CHILD,

"The night before I quit the abode of so many years of happiness, and leave a house endeared to me by so many tender ties, existing and departed, I cannot employ myself more to my own satisfaction, than by addressing my dear boy on

that important moment he has now reached, namely, his entry into life. For once, let me whisper in your ear the voice of experience, and the admonitions of a parent; alas! now sole survivor of two who have watched over your every look, thought, word, and action, for twenty-two years; and, proud am I to say, without such scrutiny ever producing aught but the most heartfelt satisfaction, for few parents can boast such a child as you. Still, the wisest may err, the strongest become feeble, and the voice of age, though neglected by the many, will not be so by such as my beloved Charles.

"In entering life, you will find yourself no small object of attention; for you are rich, well-looking, young, and of good family. Your acquaintance will therefore be eagerly sought after; you will be flattered, caressed, admired.

General dangers, and of a decided character, I am sure, your good sense requires no guidance to avoid; it is those of less apparent magnitude that I wish to warn you against,—two descriptions of persons being most particularly included.

"In all large cities there are certain individuals termed *fashionable*; of which number, many of your former companions, I am told, are now very prominent features. Young Vincent, Lord Buckley, Sir Andrew Wood, and Montagu Seymour, (the last, indeed, is your relation,) are all, as I am informed, the gayest of the gay; that is, they game, and follow whatever whim enters their head, without thought of propriety, health, wealth, or the common forms of society. As long as they are noticed as superior in the line they follow, they care not at what expense they purchase such noto-

riety. You are much too sensible to give into their profligate ways; but if you frequent the society of these persons, be wise, and never allow them to draw you into their most destructive snare,—that of play.

"Young Vincent, I am told, is a professed gamester. I see by the papers, he is on the turf; and the report of the world is, that he has been unlucky. To him, therefore, what a prize will be your means, your name, your countenance. Avoid him, I implore you, my child, as you value my peace and your own character.

"As to the others, they are all bad alike.—Poor Montagu! I pity him from my soul; for there is much in him that might have led to good, if he had understanding to conduct himself in the world. But he lacks that which my Charles happily possesses,—wisdom. I

would not for any thing in the world see you a gamester; it is the ruin, not only of fortune, but of character, morality, and feeling. I do not think you have any natural turn that way; but such companions are too attractive, and more particularly to one so little accustomed to society as yourself. I would rather hear of your associating with men of inferior minds or manners, but of quiet habits, than the set I have described. Therefore, I beseech you, do not frequent their society more than you possibly can avoid. Do not allow yourself to be the victim of their specious wiles; and to be numbered with the fools whom they flatter, caress, plunder, and abandon!

"Having cautioned you against those of your sex from whom alone I have any fears for your happiness, I must now turn to my own, which is a subject

I may justly have a title to descant upon.

"Your looks might well demand favour from them; but be not offended when I say, your fortune will be a much greater attraction. The singular system of society in England brings forth every spring more or less numbers of girls to the matrimonial market, who, till disposed of by death or wedlock, continue to appear every year with the bursting of the leaves and the early song of the birds. These girls are all led by a mother or aunt, who invariably fall upon, as their rightful prey, every youth of any expectations; but with one as yourself, of decided fortune, these harpies would rather die than relinquish their hold. Colonel D——, whom you may remember, fell a prey to Lady M—— for her niece; and she married her daughter, one of the plainest girls possi-

ble, to the Duke of A——. Both alliances turned out ill: Mrs. D—— eloped from her husband, who fell by the hand of the gallant for whom she had abandoned him; and as to the Duke and Duchess, they are existing proofs of the melancholy fate of those who are joined by the rough hand of what is most wrongly termed 'a mutual friend.'

"I do not wish you should avoid women's society. On the contrary, without it, men are harsh, ill-mannered, and selfish. But, *be cautious*, I implore.

"When you dance, let it be evidently for the pleasure of the amusement, not for the smiles of your partner; and let that partner be rarely danced with more than twice, otherwise the mother will be sure to say, 'What are your intentions?' which, to a person of delicate feelings, is the most awful question imaginable. Happily, society is so large,

that you may form female acquaintance independent of girls. My old friend, Mrs. Gordon, is still much in the world; and her nieces, I am told, are women of excellent character, in whose houses very pleasant society is ever to be found.

"I am not so afraid, however, of the girls themselves as of their mothers. Girls do not, or cannot, make such impudent attacks, whatever they may wish. The consequence is, that motherless daughters, however pretty, are not nearly so easy to dispose of in marriage, as the less well-looking, brought forward by the arts of their female parent. I can see in my mind's eye the agitation your person will create, when first you appear in public; but, how the sensation will increase when the certainty is announced of your being the possessor of 15,000*l.* a-year! Still, your good sense, I am sure, will guide you.

"How happy does such security make me!—Poor Lady Jane Seymour! She who loves her son with equal warmth! Alas! how will all such affection end? In misery, shame, and disappointment. It is inevitable — Montagu must be lost!"

"To-morrow I depart for the abode which your dear father's kindness provided for me as my home: but, in quitting this house, I anticipate, though under a different form, many a smiling hour beneath its roof when I again revisit it. I hope to see you, my dear child, the happy husband of some fair fortunate being, with many smiling pledges for a grandmother to exhaust all her doating fondness upon. And for the accomplishment of that happy end, attribute, I beg, the length, dulness, and all the imperfections of this letter, which has no merit but as the produc-

tion of one, who will yield to none in one respect—that of affection for her child. It is that love which has drawn from me the counsels this letter contains; and it is that love which, I am sure, will enforce such counsels on your mind, so that you may reap fruit therefrom."

"In this hope, I bid you, my dear Son, farewell!

Your affectionate Mother,

M. O."

My mind occupied with the above letter, I was in the midst of my toilette, the morning after my arrival in London, when the very Montagu Seymour therein mentioned entered. He was enchanted to see me; pressed my hand in both of his; said that he had not been in bed until five, but had risen

early in order to gain a comfortable tête-à-tête before I went out.—"So, hurry on your dressing gown," he continued, "my good fellow, and let us send for all the best the hotel produces: though that, to be sure, need not be asked for when the possessor of 15,000*l.* a-year commands. In such a case, every luxury of the season of course springs to the table spontaneously. I shall expect nothing less than a bottle of Champagne."

Seymour's style was so well known to me, that not a word he uttered need have surprised me; but my mother's letter had insinuated suspicion into my veins, under the guise of wisdom; and instead of the laugh with which I had been accustomed to acknowledge my friend's effusions, I faintly smiled, and that smile was only meant to conceal,

what I blush to own, the thought that Seymour's necessities, more than friendship, had caused him to share my morning meal; and his very disordered dress, and evidently hurried toilette, gave strength to the odious idea. However, I returned the pressure of his hand, ordered breakfast, and to it we both sat down.

Whatever idea I may have entertained of Seymour's animal necessities was not farther confirmed. Whilst I did full justice to a very substantial repast, Seymour played with his tea-spoon, and crumbled the dry toast about the carpet, to attract my dog, without deigning to carry a mouthful to his own lips. However, though neglecting the coffee, chocolate, eggs, muffins, &c. &c. he found plenty of employment for his mouth, and rattled on, much to my amusement.

"You are up at White's, Osborne."

I started.

"And most assuredly you will come in; for you are rich, and not known sufficiently to have made enemies as well as friends. I suppose your politics will make you have an eye to Brookes's, as well. I have no interest there, but Buckley has. You know he is become quite a radical; he dines with * * * * three times a-week, and, what is more, had A—— to dine with him. I wish I had been of the party, for I like, of all things, any thing out of the common way. But he asked Cotton instead, and Cotton's uncle would not let him accept; so then he picked up Aubrey in the street, and Aubrey talked so much, that poor A—— had no opportunity of getting in a word; so no earthly good arose from having him there."

"Why, what good did they expect?" I inquired.

"What good!" screamed Seymour; "why, what better good than good fun?—But are not you charmed with your good fortune at White's, in perspective?"

"Oh, enchanted!"

"I'll be hanged if you are.—Now, if you have a notion of any other club, such as the T——'s, or A——'s, I swear I must call you out, or, what will be twenty times more boring, cut you. I intend to make myself a person of great importance, through your means. Your cabriolet must be just like mine; we will have the same coloured coat, neck-cloth;—in short, we will be the subject of remark, for twenty-four hours! But the best thing will be, introducing you to the Mammas. I anticipate the most glorious amusement therefrom."

"Why particularly from me?" I demanded. "You might assuredly carve

pleasure for yourself from your own store; you are quite as good a catch."

"Oh, I am no catch at all; I—I—I do one or two things which have ruined my pretensions in that way, and which the Mammas think wrong; not morally, but worldlily, (if there is such a word,) wrong. I sometimes touch a card, and sometimes lose; my bills are not short, or paid with mercantile exactness; not to mention one or two other little offences; but, with your prudence and clear estate, you will be their idol.—By the by, Lucy Dormer is more admired than any thing ever was. We are all wild about her. She is the nicest little thing. It was to dance with her, I was so late at Lady G——'s last night, and to have the pleasure of putting the dear little soul into her carriage.—But, confound that fellow, Frank More! Whilst I was hunting for the vile servant, he got near my love, and actually

wheedled her pretty arm under his; so I was obliged to bundle off with old mother Cox, who was the child's chaperon.—But," pulling out the miniature of a watch, "how the time flies!—Adieu! my dear Os. I must go home and make my toilette, write a dozen *billets-doux*, and then, if you have a mind, I will drive you half over town in my cab."

I thanked him, and we parted.

Into Seymour's cab accordingly, in due time, I penetrated, and was seated next to the most exquisitely dressed person of the day. We went to Tattersal's, and into the Park, and into all the principal streets; and Seymour laughed, and nodded, and talked, and kissed his hand, and urged on his horse, till dressing-time, when we parted. He had an engagement at —— House; so I devoured my solitary meal, the first and last that,

thanks to my friends, I ever had to partake of.

I spent the evening in reading over my mother's letter; and resolved to be wise in time, and avoid Seymour. The matter was difficult, he being my friend and relation; still, I was determined it should be done. I therefore announced my intention of not becoming a member of White's, and had my name put up at one of the clubs obnoxious in the eyes of Seymour. Still, though deprived of his patronage, I found myself any thing but solitary. Amongst others, whom I formed an intimacy with, was Aubrey.

Aubrey was several years older than myself; he was a man decidedly of the world: clever, not ungentlemanlike or disagreeable; but he was not amiable. He could talk, but his actions often belied his words; still, he was a personage of importance in society, though why,

no one could exactly say. He was not handsome or rich; and his family, though good, were nothing in society. He therefore stood on his own merits; and those merits were at first sight so little prominent, that it was matter of deep research to find them at all; and still greater matter of surprise, when they were ascertained, to discover why, such as they were, they carried him into the first societies; into houses where only the *elite* of the land entered; into secrets which no other human being had ever penetrated; into offices which improved his income; and into connexions which fixed him firmly where alone accident seemed to have had a hand in placing him.

Such was Aubrey; and somehow he became my friend. Though a member, he applauded my not belonging to White's. His aid brought me in for Brookes's,

which, however, I found dull, and did not frequent. Aubrey frequently rung in my ears his fears that I should be ruined by my servants; and obliged me to part with a lad I had brought from the country, and take a groom of his own in his place, who, I in the course of time discovered, cheated me outrageously, to indemnify himself, I believe, for having served Aubrey for four years without wages, but upon the promise of his master's doing something *good* for him. That *good* he paid me the compliment of contriving that I should effect.

The pleasure I had in Aubrey's society was so doubtful, that why I was so much with him I could not well comprehend. Our tastes agreed on very few points; and his manners, though of the world, yet had an easy familiarity about them, which, even with men, was

grating to the feelings of one who had been brought up in the style of manners which I had witnessed in my father's drawing-room. I could almost have pronounced them vulgar, but vulgar they were not; and with men of at all mediocre manners, he moved a perfect prince; though still his familiar, *insouciant*, decided air never abandoned him. He lived with me constantly, and always hinted the numerous engagements he resigned for the pleasure of my company.

He had a way of rendering himself interesting to a man of wealth, by always talking of the horrors of poverty. Whatever he did, sprung from this insurmountable evil: it was from this misfortune he could not marry as he liked; so he was obliged to keep a mistress: it was the same misfortune which made

him play, to pick up a few pounds of the wealthy: it was the same barrier which confined him to the smoky atmosphere of London; but how could a beggar travel? It was want of means obliged him to be obliged to his friends for a dinner, and to their carriages for conveying him to and from them. And he pronounced all these lamentations in the same breath with which he found fault with the Champagne he was carrying to his lips; gave hints that the dinner he was devouring with the appetite of one famished, was hardly fit for a gentleman's table; complained of the roughness of all carriages, unless particularly hung; of the ill-manner the horses which drew him drew together; of the ill cut of the coachman's coat; of the absurd play of the man from whose pocket he filled his own; and lamented

the unenviable lot of all his married friends! Such was Aubrey, and, such as he was, we were always together.

I was indebted to him for many agreeable acquaintance, particularly among women; but he always cautioned me against their arts.

"There is only one class of females," he would pronounce, "in whom the game is not to be artificial, excepting in looks; therefore, in good society, actual beauty or ugliness may be more easily ascertained; but the mind is only exposed to view with those in whom intellectual acquirements have nothing to do in their connexions with men. Their good and bad feelings are equally exposed to view: the last, I fear, are too often the painful sight such knowledge discovers; but if the first, and such instances are not uncommon, how power-

ful is the attraction, as being genuine and unsolicited."

The females I frequented were not at all, however, such. I danced, talked, laughed, rode, walked with at least twenty girls, fair, dark, gay, sentimental, short, tall, fat, thin. I had no decided flirt (that was my system), and so I divided my favours in pretty equal shares amongst such as I have described —twenty laughing, dancing girls. I continued this more pleasant than exciting state of things for some time.

At length a renewed acquaintance made me discover that a more enlivening intercourse was possible. Lucy Dormer I had known from a child, though for the last four years we had not met. The death of her mother removed her to a distance, and fixed her in the house of her uncle, Lord New-

port. Lady Newport was herself young and handsome, and her house the most attractive of the day. This house was not one, however, in which Aubrey was intimate. He endeavoured to explain his exclusion as resting entirely with himself. Lady Newport was impertinent, and he cut her! However, she seemed quite capable of existing without him; and, through Lucy's introduction, I found my way into Lady Newport's society, without Aubrey's assistance.

I think you must remember Lucy. She was certainly the loveliest creature I ever saw, and indeed is so now. Her slight Hebe figure, her lily complexion, auburn hair, ivory teeth, and laughing rosy lips, formed to my taste the beau ideal of perfect female beauty. With her I could not be so reserved, or rather guarded, as with others, we were such old friends; so we renewed our ac-

quaintance with almost childish glee. She seemed my sister, and would turn to me as the person most her friend of any that surrounded her; for, indeed, I knew her far better than any other she lived with. At that time, I did not think her clever; but she appeared amiable, feeling, and not otherwise than sensible. Talented I also did not deem her; yet I know now, though she made no display, that she was far more accomplished than most of her acquaintance; and she had cleverness to cultivate her mind in private; so that she might have puzzled half the men she lived with in public, had such triumph been her object. But, however, to me she only appeared, first, most beautiful, and, secondly, most agreeable. I tried to adopt rules in my conduct to her, but I could not succeed. If she wanted an arm, my own flew forth spontaneously to

support her. If she looked grave, I was across the room in an instant to enliven her; nor did I reflect how far wise was such conduct. When Lady Newport's carriage appeared, I checked my horse to catch Lucy's smiling eye.—In short, I loved: but I had to thank Aubrey for the discovery.

"You will really be doing a public benefit, by marrying poor Lucy Dormer," he exclaimed one day.

"Marry!"

"Certainly, marry; for her little feet and small head got so into the wits of the University boys last year, and who will soon be congregating again in this town, that half the mothers in the land are in greater horror of poor innocent Lucy, than of wrinkles and old age. A penniless little thing is not what they want. But however, seriously, I am delighted at your intentions; she is so

poor, poor soul! that any one would be reckoned a good marriage for her. And with your fortune, to bestow yourself upon her, is just what I like; it is liberal; a quality getting so much out of date. Lady Newport, of course Lady Newport, has had no hand in the matter?"

"Lady Newport!" I exclaimed.—"What are you talking of, Aubrey? I I am not intending to marry Lucy; at least, I think not; I have no idea, at all, of her, or any one, as a wife—I am almost certain;—and as to Lady Newport, you must be aware that she has too many concerns of her own to attend to, to think of those of others. It is her indifference to Lucy, and the isolated situation she holds, which makes any one, more particularly her early friend, desirous to pay her every attention; the nature of which attentions, I presume, you have mistaken as concerns myself."

"Very possibly; you must know best; indeed I know nothing—I am not in the least curious. But as to Lady Newport, there I must set you right; she is not as careless as you imagine; she does not wish Lucy should disturb her flirtations, whether political, scientifical, or sentimental; and therefore she is the more ready to encourage any one who will pay her attention: and the way she abandons her, is to secure your compassion."

"Compassion!" I exclaimed.

"Oh, I do not mean yours particularly, but any one not absolutely a beggar. I could swear, with all her affected indifference, that Lady Newport has ascertained the extent of your income, the size of your country-house, your establishment, and pursuits."

"Nonsense, nonsense," I said sharply.

"No more, Aubrey, I beg; you must be mistaken."

"Very likely," was Aubrey's cool answer.—"What is the hour?—four. —God bless me! I was to have been at —— (naming the first Duke in the land) at half-past three. *Adieu, au revoir*, at Malton's; his cook *vaut bien ses gages;* which is more than can be said of half the approved artists who pretend to feed us."

Aubrey departed, and I was left to meditate. My mother's letter came into my mind. "I am fairly caught," I groaned piteously; "Aubrey is right: it is too true, but I will escape though I die."

Aubrey's remarks preyed upon my mind; and I took a bold resolution accordingly, for a wise man;—I resolved to quit London for Newmarket! It was

the July meeting: Seymour was going there, I knew; and I wrote, proposing to carry him. Though not near so much with Seymour, as our former intimacy demanded, yet still I had a good deal of intercourse with him. He readily consented, therefore, to my offer; and congratulated me on the proof of good taste this visit gave evidence of."

"It is mere curiosity," I replied; "taste has nothing to do with it."

"So we all say at first," said Seymour, laughing.

I sighed! my mother's caution entered my mind; but then, again, a dinner engagement with Lord Newport made me firm to the purpose which would enable me to elude it, and which, for a moment, I hesitated to accomplish. Into my travelling chaise, built after the most approved model, by a builder not patronized by the King, or any of

the Royal family, but by the Honourable William Aubrey, did Seymour and myself accordingly place ourselves, one fine morning in July, and were from that moment rather flying than moving in a whirlwind of dust along that road which leadeth to the frozen plains in reality, though feverish plains they become, of Newmarket.

Very happily—for my nerves were not in the very best form, according to the language of the place we were about to visit,—Seymour's were equally, for him, unstrung. I did not know the cause; but there were moments in the journey, where he was evidently thoughtful; and he expressed himself with less reckless gaiety than I had ever known before. Still, he was quite talkative enough, and occasionally allowed me to talk; to do which, I had known the time when, for his companion, it was

somewhat difficult. The conversation turned upon Aubrey.

"It was not by his advice you cut White's, and went off to the T——'s. *That* was an atrocious proceeding;—but every one to his taste. I hope the monkeys who have seen the world are agreeable company."

"I very seldom frequent any club. One is just as good as another to read the papers in."

"There you are decidedly wrong," observed Seymour gravely. "Even in the particular of a newspaper, it is better to receive one of those precious documents from the smooth hand or smooth glove of a well-washed and perfumed dandy, than from the hard, ungloved, unperfumed, unwashed paw of one whose last knowledge of soap and water was not before the Flood, for that ablu-

tion might hold good for many years, but before he groped in mummy dust, or amongst the ruins of Palmyra.—So, you see, I will not allow your newspapers to be the same at the T——'s, as at White's."

I laughed. "Well, I am very willing to allow you to be right; for, to own the truth, I never read them any where but at home."

Observing Seymour taking out a small book, and hastily pencil a remark therein, and then deposit the volume with care in his secret coat-pocket, I inquired if he found any thing in our journey sufficiently interesting to note in his journal. To say Seymour smiled, would be a very faint description of his mirth at my interrogation. Even laughter would hardly describe the glee he indulged at my expense. He threw

me the little work; it proved the first I had ever seen, though I certainly had heard of such things—a betting-book!

I now joined in Seymour's smiles. He proceeded to elucidate the mysteries of the book: and he showed me, or attempted to show me, that, by the refinement of the art he was master of, he should, by standing immense sums on one horse, and equally large on another, and thousands on the mare, and hundreds on the horse, and fifties on the old one, and ten on the filly, *certainly* realize twenty-five pounds!

It was now my turn to laugh; and I accordingly freely indulged my mirth. The absurdity of the whole thing struck Seymour's lively mind at the same moment, and a duet of laughter ensued for some time.

"My good fellow," I at length exclaimed, "when next you want twenty

pounds, do come to me, and do not distract your brain by these abstruse calculations, which, in a case of the national debt, of a national bankruptcy, may be very well bestowed; but, as it is, will really turn your hair grey before its time, and tear your mind to pieces for nothing!"

We reached Newmarket;—all was bustle and business. I did not dislike the air, or the life; and I liked to see the horses; but I would not bet a shilling, though Vincent offered me a good thing, and Seymour told me I was mad to refuse. However, I thought of the proverb, '*Il n'y a le premier pas qui coute,*' and would not be drawn in. Vincent had his revenge by carrying off my travelling companion, leaving me to return to London in solitary grandeur. And not only that;—though they started an hour after me, they contrived to

beat the Honourable William Aubrey's coachmaker's travelling chaise into London hollow, and gave the first communication in St. James's Street of the intelligence of the morning.

My Newmarket trip did not add to my popularity; and a doubt arose in my mind, whether it was not sustaining my character of wisdom on too lofty a pinnacle, when it cost me the good-will of a few men who were more their own enemies than any one's else; and with whom, had I ventured a couple of hundreds, I should have well repaid all their good-natured hospitality; without which, to me, as a stranger, the plains of Newmarket would have been awful indeed. And which kindness, though Aubrey pronounced it to be selfish, on the part of the bestowers, I had too much personal love so to consider it.

I was engaged to go in September to

Lord Newport's, and, spite of the fears I entertained in that quarter, to go there I determined. Aubrey was against it. It was the dullest house in the world. Newport was so silent, Lady Newport so talkative; and the shooting so bad, and the society so boring, and the cook so indifferent, and the whole thing so great a failure.—Still I said I would go.

"Mind what I say," were Aubrey's parting words. I did so, and was quite of a different opinion.

In mixed London society, Lord Newport was little attractive beyond an air of rank and a countenance which commanded admiration: he said little and did less. In the country, he was a perfectly different character; surrounded by his lovely children; in the society of his beautiful wife; with his friends, and country pursuits; his spirits revived, and he appeared to an advantage which

no one who only saw him listlessly picking his teeth in an Opera-box, or dosing over his turtle-soup between two superannuated Duchesses, could ever have dreamt of as possible, even under the most advantageous circumstances.

Whilst Lady Newport, in London, was the finest lady that ever carried the name; in the country she could look after her parish, her children, her neighbours, her garden, and her guests; and retain nothing of la belle dame, but what was necessary to shed ease without freedom, spirit without noise, and wit without pedantry, over the circle in which she reigned the queen, and to drive from thence wearisome or oft-repeated discourse, localities, newspaper gossip, and all such unmeaning conversation.

The society was not large, but agreeable; and I found myself more happily situated there than I had been ever be-

fore in my life: and this was certainly to a degree independent of Lucy; for, though, when she was present, an additional ray of light seemed to illumine all around, yet she was not at all obtrusive by way of being an assistant in doing the honours of the house, nor was she called upon to make a display for the amusement of those therein. The ease which reigned around, she partook of; and though far from estranging herself from society, yet there were times when she would vanish to follow her own pursuits, without choosing to consider herself as a party concerned in what might be the general object of the rest of the company. One of that party (myself) would often, in thought, pursue her to the limpid stream, by which I imagined her seated, with a book or pencil; or into her own little boudoir, following her independent pursuits.

It generally proved that she had accompanied the children at such times in their walk; and some good-humoured raillery upon the subject of her passion for talking Italian with the governess always ensued, from her uncle.

Whenever Lucy was present, however, she was only second to Lady Newport; and, to pay her even the most common attentions, I had to contend with half-a-dozen others, at least. One or two of these competitors were decidedly good matches, and gave symptoms occasionally that they had more serious designs than to sit by her at dinner, or to obtain her smile by drinking wine with her. But Lady Newport did not seem to regard them; and Lucy, still less; and I could not help observing, or thinking I observed, that I was more distinguished than any other, both by Lady Newport and Lucy. That I dis-

tinguished Lucy, is certain; for it reached Aubrey's ears, who wrote to me in these words:—

"I am now quite certain you like Lucy; for I understand you forgot to eat, in gazing at her; and I have read lately the eye is never to be mistaken. A person may discipline the muscles of the face and voice; but there is something in the eye beyond the will, and thus frequently it gives the lie direct; so I will believe what I hear of your glances, and not what you write of your feelings."

On receiving this letter, I determined not to look so much at Lucy in future. But the more I observed of her mind, the more I became enamoured of her person: if love was not, according to the old song, to be "fed by gazing," it

could still be nurtured by the ears. The more I heard Lucy speak, the more I admired her; and it was not difficult to observe that I was liked in return. Why should I not propose to her? This was a question I retired to rest one night to ruminate upon. The next morning, the following paragraph appeared in a letter from my mother.

"Poor Lucy! dear child that she was—how I mourn over the hands she is now placed in. What a school for dissipation, worldly-mindedness, vanity and folly! Well, well! the favour you describe her enjoying with her uncle and aunt was more painful for me to hear of, than that neglect, I had been told, she experienced at their hands. Their love can only arise from gratified vanity in the admiration she enjoys and the attraction she produces; whilst their

neglect might have opened her eyes to the vanity fair in which she exists. Before it is too late, I should like to see her snatched from the brink of that precipice on which she stands, by marriage with some sensible man:—But not with you, my son. You are too young yourself in the ways of the world to embark with one who, though junior to yourself, is far more conversant in its intricate and mysterious paths. Thanks to Lady Newport for such knowledge, whether that of precept or example."

The morning I received this letter, I left Lord Newport's.

My journey to London was any thing but lively; and the deserted October air of the streets, when I reached the Metropolis, did not promise to remove my sadness. As I drove down Bond-street, a solitary figure appeared on the other-

wise vacant *trottoir*. He approached slowly. It was Seymour. In a moment I had stopped the carriage, opened the door, and sprung forward to meet him. My manner was particularly cordial, and, for once, it seemed as if Seymour's was not inclined to respond. However, we shook hands: I linked my arm within his, after directing my equipage to go on without me.

"You are come from Worsley Park, I suppose?" said Seymour as we moved on.

"Yes; I left it this morning."

"And are now on your road into Derbyshire to see your mother?—Or is it your lawyer in town you are hurrying up to consult with?"

"I have no object in town or country; my plans are perfectly unsettled.—Is any one in town?"

"Aubrey, Madame, and Mademoiselle—not one creature besides. They haunt me, and will really drive me down

to Newmarket, where I had vowed not to go. They bivouac in the Park, or St. James's-street, I verily believe. I have tried all hours to avoid them, but in vain. You should however know whether Aubrey has really a roof-tree to cover his head?"

"Yes, and a *mènage* also; and rather a good one, moreover."

"What! have you tried his cook?"

"I have dined with him."

"When, I dare say, he cooked the dinner himself."

"I would not swear he had not, or perhaps Madame."

"Angelica's wit, I should think, would be rarely tried, though only for the task of dressing a cucumber.—I trust, therefore, that when you partook of Aubrey's hospitality, she had nothing to do with the feast beyond ornament, to compensatefor the want of epergne, or or-molu graces."

"So, you give Angelica's intellect no credit in gracing the feast."

"Her intellect! Who knows or cares whether she has or not sense? not I, I am sure: I hardly know her person by sight, much less her mind. But I conceived that Aubrey's mistress must be a fool; the being such, seemed to settle the matter to my mind; and, as I am quite satisfied with my opinion, let us talk on any other subject.—What have you been about at Worsley? How are the Ansleys? How is Lucy—Miss Dormer, I should say?"

"They are all well."

"And who are there?—That house is delightful; one of the few country-houses which are so.—Who did you have whilst you were there?"

"Oh! every body for a short or long time, as it might be."

"You were there some time."

"Six weeks."

"And—and—Lucy—how does she look?"

"Beautiful!"

Seymour sighed. "And when—and when am I to congratulate you on her becoming Mrs.—Mrs. Osborne?"

The last word seemed pronounced with effort.

"Never! What are you dreaming of?"

"Never!" exclaimed Seymour. "I shall repeat your words.—What are *you* dreaming of?"

"Of being wise," I replied.

"Then, your wisdom being only a dream, it is one which you may be awakened from; and if your sagacious reveries lead you to no fitter purpose, the sooner you arouse the better, and prove your waking powers by uniting yourself

to the most charming girl in the world. She cannot have looked coldly upon *you*."

"I positively do not comprehend you; you seemed to have formed a judgment, and to be inclined to argue thereon, without any grounds for debate, or even without having your original opinion furnished by myself or others."

"As to *others*, there I beg your pardon. I have heard from a thousand mouths, that you are deeply in love with Miss Dormer."

"I never could have imagined that you would have listened to the gossip of the world. But, however, supposing the mouths you speak of, speak truth, does it follow that I am either an accepted or discarded suitor for her hand in marriage? I *admire* Lucy, I confess."

"Do you *love* her?" demanded Seymour vehemently.

"What satisfaction could it give you to know I did?"

"The satisfaction which the prospect of your and her mutual happiness must give."

"You are very kind; but even did I love Lucy, she would never be my wife; the school she has been brought up in is not domestic enough for my taste."

"Domestic! nonsense. — Are not Lord and Lady Newport domestic enough? does she not nurse all her children? and when they went abroad, did not they carry a moving nursery in their suite, for the dissemination of domestic love on the road in which they moved, and for the edification of every Court in which they established themselves, from Stockholm to Madrid? and is not Lucy herself, with the temper as well as the form of an angel, created

both to adore and be adored in private life? *Be wise;* and if she looks not coldly upon you, do not despise the offered affections of one who is as capable of loving, as of being loved."

"Lucy does *not* look coldly upon me."

Seymour was silent a moment, and regarding me attentively: "You do not mean to say you do upon her?"

"No, no, no; but in future, I shall avoid her society;—it will cost me dear, but so I must act."

"Well, well, well, you know best. If you *love*, however, you are mad."

"I am only *wise*," I answered.

Seymour muttered something which sounded very like "Curse your wisdom." By that time, however, we had reached the door of my hotel;—we parted—Seymour accepting my invitation to return to dinner.

When our repast was concluded, the conversation again fell upon Worsley. Seymour, however, spoke no more of Lucy. We talked of the master and mistress of the house—of their place, horses, guests, of all but their niece; and the conversation seemed about to branch into another channel, without her being named. This was not my wish; and though I had rather Seymour had brought forward the subject himself, yet I was desirous to open to him the true state of my feelings, lest the opportunity for doing so should escape.

A few words sufficed. Lucy's attractions, and my own and my mother's wisdom, comprised all I had to say.

"Would it produce any change in your ideas, if you knew Lucy liked you?" inquired Seymour, when my communication had ceased.

"Not in the least."

"You are a most enviable stoic," said he.—"However, I must tell you I have seen a letter from Lady Newport, in which your evident admiration for her niece is mentioned; and she describes Lucy as on the verge of returning such partiality with all the warmth of her affectionate nature."

I started.—"And to whom was the letter addressed?"

"To myself."

"You! I did not know you were intimate enough with Lady Newport, to correspond with her."

"We are great friends: I had the letter from her only this morning, consequently my first thought at meeting you, was that you were under the impatience of a lover, which made him quit the presence of his mistress to expedite the men of law, without whose permission,

it seems, no two people can ever be united in the bonds of matrimony."

"Did Lady Newport seem to think my attentions *very* decided?" I inquired with more interest than was suitable to the wise part I had to act.

"You may judge for yourself:—here is Lady Newport's letter."

A female's letter is seldom unamusing; it may be from folly, if for nothing else. Lady Newport, however, was no fool, and she wrote with ease as well as sense. After some account of a *battue* to suit the sex of her correspondent, she gave a hasty touch at a late political event, and concluded some remarks nearer home, by these words:

"Mr. Osborne is decidedly much *epris* by our pretty child Lucy. There is so much more of genuine feeling in his disposition, and his character is so much

less tainted by the common faults of men of his years and station, that his admiration cannot be placed on the low level one must class the *homage* of half, at least, of the fine men of the day. And I think Lucy is flattered accordingly by his attention,—perhaps more than flattered. You know what my wishes are; and though I do not discourage Mr. Osborne, and should feel if ever his attentions proceeded the length of proposals, that I must sanction them; yet, I must say, I am not interested in his cause. They are both young: I try as much as possible to be perfectly neuter; and Newport himself has never been able to draw an opinion from me one way or the other."

"Lady Newport, it seems," I observed, after an attentive perusal of the above letter, "has her own projects for the disposal of Miss Dormer."

"How does that appear?" demanded Seymour quickly.

I read the words, "You know what my wishes are."

Seymour arose, and, approaching the fire, gazed in silence on the flames. I thought he looked red; but it might be the light in which he stood, which gave him an unusually flushed look.

"Does that letter," he at length said, "make any alteration in your intentions?"

"None whatever.—I wish Lucy happy, but the less we see of each other, I am sure, the better."

Seymour gazed earnestly at me, as if he would trust rather to my countenance than my words. Then taking hastily my hand, he wished me good night.

"What makes you run away so soon?" I inquired.

"I have an engagement."

"We shall meet to-morrow?"

"To-morrow I leave town."

"Leave town! for Newmarket, eh?"

"No; for any where else, to get away from this dull abode, where I am growing splenetic and blue-deviled. Take care, Osborne, it has not the same effect upon you."

It was many months before Seymour and I met again,—months which had entirely decided the colour of our future lives.

Though London was dull, my solitary country-house was more so; so in London I remained. Aubrey and I soon met; and with him and his chère amie, for want of other society, I became soon more domesticated than ever.

When first I knew Angelica, I was much struck by her beauty. Aubrey was fond of her, and she submitted, more apparently from gratitude than

pleasure, to his attentions. She gave me to understand as much herself.

"Aubrey is very kind to me," she would constantly repeat, with an air of self-devotion; and letting fall her dark eyes to the earth, as if to conceal that expression they lacked, and which she upbraided herself should not be there.

Aubrey was at this time very low in the world: I offered to assist him; he refused decidedly, but explained that his chief distress was the probability that his connexion with Angelica must close.

"I would give worlds to be able to marry her," he exclaimed; "but that is out of the question. Our present establishment I cannot afford to support any longer. As my wife, matters would, for her, be only worse than better, as depriving her of what, poor soul! her bread rests upon—the liberality of

her protector—perhaps even something more permanent, a husband!—No, no; I must not marry her, though our separation will cost her many a bitter pang."

Aubrey's establishment was broken up; and in an elegant house in Gloucester Place, the mistress of as elegant a carriage, her beauty enhanced by every art that dress could give, Angelica was fully indemnified for the cruel necessity, by the lavish hand and devoted attention of him who now addresses you. In simple language, from the mistress of Aubrey, she became mine. I had also the benevolence to take charge of Aubrey's child, who, under the name of Aubrey Osborne Wright, (the last being the only name he is entitled to) is now improving his mind at my expense at Winchester school.

But I will not weary you with particulars. My mother's sudden death

made the society of Angelica more than ever necessary to me; I could not bear to be away from her; still I had the virtue not to allow her ever to visit any of my country seats. For several months in the year, I therefore was obliged to be parted from her; a deplorable obligation, which I had hardly philosophy to endure.

It was in one of these self-devoted exiles that I fell ill; and in a large, sick, solitary chamber received a letter from Angelica: it was full of tenderness and sorrow for my indisposition; but the purport of the letter was to break gently to me the return from India of an old and still constant lover, who had no other desire than to share with her, as his wife, the gains he had accumulated in the East. To quit me, Angelica said, would be heart-breaking; but her duty to her child, her wish for an honest

name, and a legal protector, were calls which must be attended to. She wrote, therefore, to announce her having *almost* accepted "the Captain's" offers. In a day or two her final answer was to be given.

It is vain to argue how events might have been where the result is apparent. I am the husband of Angelica. The above-mentioned letter is the primary cause that I am so; but how far aided by the circumstances in which it was received, it is impossible to ascertain: my belief however is, that, without such circumstances, the result would never have been what it is. I was ill and alone: I wanted a companion and a nurse. The last society I had seen of females, was that of some odious Misses, daughters of a neighbour, who had, in the vulgar language, so decidedly set their caps at me, as to have dis-

gusted the most vain, and to have been evident to the most simple-minded. By comparison with them, Angelica was as an angel of light and propriety. I wrote to Angelica, desiring her to dismiss the Indian Captain, and offering myself. We were accordingly married!

Aubrey wrote to congratulate me upon the event.

"You have done, my dear fellow," he said, "just as I should have done, had not my unfortunate poverty stood in the way of my wishes."

Very different was Seymour's letter.

"Your communication had been anticipated by the reports of the world; and you have confirmed that upon which, I must fairly say, I can make no comment. However, I must place a similar mark of confidence in you, as that you have had the kindness to repose in me. I

am going to be married, and to Lucy Dormer. Before we quit the subject of our mutual communications, you must allow me to trouble you with a few lines respecting my love.

"Some time before your renewed acquaintance with Lucy, I loved her. Lady Newport knew of my passion: of Lucy's knowledge I was more dubious; but what I was but too well certain of, was the ruinous state of my affairs, and I determined, in consequence, upon your showing some symptoms of a similar inclination as myself, to relinquish my love in favour of yours. The steadiness of your character, and the state of your large fortune, (so different from mine,) held out a prospect of felicity for Lucy, which I could not bear my selfish passion should interfere with. For this reason, I estranged myself from her society, though I secretly watched both your

and her motions. When you went to Worsley, I considered the affair as decided; and I must confess, with some jealous or selfish pangs, prepared to root Lucy from my heart. You returned from Worsley---our conversation you may remember—you had no idea of marrying her.—New life seemed to spring in my veins; I flew down to Worsley; and, beggar as I was, in one week was at Lucy's feet. But I will be honest; I had a rival in her affections—yourself. Your attentions had not been unobserved or unfelt, and from herself I heard that you had touched her heart, and that your desertion had only proved the extent of her attachment. Still she did not bid me despair, and Lord and Lady Newport gave me their unqualified support. A few months, therefore, brought my little Lucy into a more complaisant state; and her heart, which had

been half-way into your bosom, made its way so entirely into mine, that it has there settled itself, never to move more.

"For once, fortune has favoured love. —Instead of a cottage in Devonshire, where my little angel and myself were about to depart, awaiting the time when my rents should no longer be for the benefit of the sons of Israel, a most worthy relation, whom I never saw, has departed this life, and, dying intestate, his whole property, far larger than my original estate, devolves on your humble servant. I only hope that this unexpected turn of fortune, I shall ever properly appreciate, and not convert into a vehicle for sordidness, extravagance, or selfishness.

"Of course, I consider myself as the happiest of men; and of course you do the same. We have both chosen un-

fettered; the probability is, that we have a better chance of happiness than many. I earnestly trust your Angelica will prove all that you deserve; and that my estimation of your merits is very far from a low one, my letter must have proved. As for you, I would have relinquished her whom from my boyhood I had adored; you decided otherwise; it is not for me to complain.

"Adieu! say every thing civil for me to Mrs. Osborne; and let me implore that your love for her may still leave one vacant spot in your heart for friendship, and that therein you will let me remain as of old, for Lucy has not so entire possession of my bosom, but that Osborne is still there, and ever will be, as long as my existence lasts."

It is useless to continue my tale. What more have I to add? My charac-

ter for *wisdom* has been well exemplified. My nickname of "*Solomon*," has been proved most appropriate.

One fact, however, which speaks volumes, I may record, to show that sense and myself are not utterly at variance, and that I am not obstinate, however absurd. To Mrs. Seymour, the woman I thought too worldly for my wife, I have resigned the entire care of my only child,—a daughter. With her she has resided ever since she was two years of age; and, to do poor Angelica justice, the arrangement was made without a murmur, though not without a tear, on her part. The child is happy, and is spared all the mortification that home must, to one of her sex, ever give rise to; and in Lucy she has found a mother, whom Angelica herself could not surpass in attention and affection; and whom, in every other respect, I

need not observe, as a guide and model, must not be compared to the unfortunate mother of my child, and destined heiress of my fortunes.

However, I am not fond of complaining: I like my books, and my house: my wife loves me, and it is my duty to protect and devote myself to one who, without me, would be the most isolated being on the face of the earth.

CONCLUSION.

THE story of "*Solomon*" made no small impression upon my mind; but to think of him was useless. For a short time I continued to frequent his house. Suddenly it seemed to me that I was no longer so welcome. I suspected the

cause; but it was one I was too proud to combat. Angelica was not my friend, or rather I would not be hers. The few who frequented Osborne's society flattered her for his sake: my straightforward nature would not allow me so to lower myself. She became suspicious of my growing influence with her husband; but a letter I wrote to him proposing a tour on the Continent with myself, and without his companion, decided my fate.

I never found Osborne at home afterwards!

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